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ANTON CHEKHOV

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ANTON CHEKHOV

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY LUCY M. CORES

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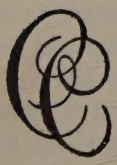

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ANTON PAVLOVICH CHEKHOV

THE PLACE of any given literary work in world literature may be said to be determined by its ability to transcend the barriers of language, nationality, and time. A writer, like everybody else, is a product of a certain way of life, and his work reflects the atmosphere in which he lives and writes. If he is big enough, however, what he has to say will be interesting to others besides his contemporaries. That is why Maupassant is still eagerly read by the Russians, O. Henry by the French, and Chekhov by the English-speaking peoples. The measure of Chekhov's greatness is that he has managed to make the emotions and experiences of his generation seem real and significant to the reader of today.

Chekhov's life lacked the spectacular traits that marked the careers of other Russian writers. He lived simply, worked hard, won the fame he deserved, and died at an early age. Yet his biographers have found the development of his complex and subtle character a fascinating subject. Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born in 1860 in Taganrog, a sleepy small town in the south of Russia. He was the grandson of a serf who redeemed himself and his family from bondage before the emancipation of the serfs in 1862. His father kept a grocery store. As is often the case in a small town, it served as a sort of social club, and young Anton found much material for his future work in the colorful gabbling throng that daily invaded it. The boy was endowed with keen observation and a sprightly humor that helped to brighten his somewhat grim childhood, dominated by a sternly pious father.

After finishing high school in his home town, young Chekhov went to Moscow in 1879 to study to be a doctor. It was during his student years in Moscow University that his literary talent manifested itself. His family was always short of money, and the young doctor-to-be

had to support himself and them by his pen before he was able to earn his medical tuition. He preferred this mode of earning a living to the traditional sideline of an impecunious student—tutoring. His first works were short sketches, "shorter than a sparrow's beak," that appeared in humorous periodicals, usually under the pseudonym of Antosha Chekhonte. Many of these elegant trifles sparkled with the unmistakable brilliance of genius. There was no special philosophy or social consciousness about them. They were written primarily to amuse the reader. Chekhov was particularly fond of poking fun at the bureaucratic officials who infested Russia and whose rigid hierarchy, snobbishness, and hypocrisy lent themselves easily to ridicule.

To his surprise Chekhov made a considerable name for himself as a humorist; so that he was encouraged to go on writing even after he became a doctor. "Medicine is my lawful wife, and literature is my mistress," he once wrote to a friend. He did not long persevere in his "legitimate" calling. The shingle with the name "Dr. A. P. Chekhov" soon disappeared, although he continued to practice medicine sporadically.

Chekhov freely owned his debt to his original profession. It trained him in scientific accuracy and developed in him a capacity for clinical observation. His qualities as a writer were the same ones that would make a great doctor: that rare combination of keen perception and human compassion. His clever physician's hands knew how to probe deeply into the wounds of humanity and unerringly touched the dark, the corroded spot that marked decay. He had a characteristic tenderness for the ailing and the helpless. No novelist has had a kinder feeling for children and his stories about them were among his best.

Characteristic too was the objectivity which he strove to preserve in all his work. He held it his duty not to intrude upon the story, "not to judge his characters and what they say." This attitude explained to a great extent the lack in Chekhov of the revolutionary spirit of protest which was so evident in other writers of the same period, as for example Gorki or Kuprin. (His only "unpleasantness" with the authorities occurred in 1902 when he resigned his membership in the

Academy of Science as a protest against the cancellation by the government of Maxim Gorki's election to that honorary society.) To those who accused him of indifference his reply was that he was opposed to any of the dogmas that threatened to hinder the task of the observer. "I am neither a liberal nor a conservative, neither a monk nor an indifferentist. . . . I only want to be a free artist." This did not necessarily denote an ivory-tower mentality. Chekhov was not given to fulminations and believed a dispassionate description of what he saw to be the most effective indictment of the conditions around him.

In 1884 the first collection of Chekhov's short stories was published. It was favorably received by the public, who sensed a fresh young talent behind the inconsequential little tales. This reception surprised the modest young doctor. That he considered himself nothing better than a mere newspaper hack is apparent from a letter he wrote to one of his early admirers. "If I really have a talent that should be respected, I confess that until now I have not respected it. I wrote my stories like a reporter hurriedly jotting down notes at a fire—mechanically and heedlessly, caring little about my reader or myself."

This was the last time that a reproach for careless writing could be directed at Chekhov. After being persuaded to take himself seriously as a writer he accepted the responsibilities that went along with his calling. His subsequent stories showed faultless workmanship. He resembled Maupassant (whom he greatly admired and frequently thought of translating into Russian) in his simplicity, his unerring sense of proportion, and a terse economy of words.

Chekhov's untried wings grew stronger in the sunshine of public approbation. The following years were busy and productive. He gave up the cheap press and began contributing to the leading journals. For the first time he tasted the joys of economic security. He was able to travel, gathering a wealth of material from his trips to the Caucasus, to the Crimea, and along the Volga. He tried his hand at drama, writing, among others, *Ivanov,* a heavy psychological play, and *The Wood Demon,* a rather superficial comedy which was later transformed into

the vastly superior *Uncle Vanya*. In 1888 he was awarded half of the coveted Pushkin Prize for a collection of short stories.

Chekhov's reserved nature expanded in the genial atmosphere of hospitable Moscow. Possessed of an extraordinary talent for social contact, he kept open house and surrounded himself with friends. This grave young intellectual, with his diffident manner and his radiant childlike smile, exerted a great personal fascination on his contemporaries. An unbelievable number of people have claimed intimate friendship with Chekhov. The truth was he liked to draw people out—a useful occupation for a writer—and it was difficult to tell how much of his interest was personal and how much professional. Many of his friends saw, with a wry smile, their most intimate traits mirrored in his works. But his beautiful, sad eyes looked at you with such genuine kindness that it was easy to forgive them for seeing too much.

Chekhov's gregariousness had its morbid side. "When I am alone," he wrote, "I am somehow terrified." What terrified him, one wonders—the specter of death that seemed to draw nearer when he was alone (as early as 1888 there appeared the first ominous signs of tuberculosis); or the even more depressing futility of life around him?

The character of his writings, in the meanwhile, underwent a gradual change. There were fewer lighthearted anecdotes, and his laughter acquired a sorrowful ring. In his stories of that period the sensitive and the tenderhearted perish; the brutal and the unscrupulous ones live on and thrive; is it not a pity that the world is like that and that there is absolutely nothing to be done about it? This theme, like a sustained minor chord, gave his stories a melancholy, twilight quality that came to be known as the Chekhovian mood. This, incidentally, is a phenomenon that is well known to the students of Russian literature. It is almost as if every Russian writer of stature upon attaining maturity took upon his shoulders, as a sort of somber mantle, the full weight of his people's woes. In that sense Chekhov was the spiritual successor of Dostoyevski, who died just about the time he started writing.

Chekhov's works reflected only too well the disheartening times in

which he lived. The Russo-Turkish war, vindicated though it was by the liberation of the Bulgarians from the Turkish yoke, brought in its train a wave of reaction, which reached its height in the eighties. Particularly hard hit were the intellectuals, who saw their dearest hopes of progress smothered in general apathy and disillusionment. Better than any other writer, Chekhov was able to convey the sense of intellectual bankruptcy that tortured his generation. Nor did he write only of his own class; there is no social group which he had not humorously and sorrowfully depicted. He looked around him, saw the oppression that lay like a pall over his native land, and said softly: "This is no way to live, gentlemen."

Yet, paradoxically, it was this same Chekhov who said, "Do you know that in three or four hundred years the entire earth will be a flourishing garden? How wonderful it will be to live then!"—who steadfastly claimed that in ten years Russia would have a constitution.

The nineties ushered in the humanitarian phase of Chekhov's career. He had become interested in the Russian penal law and, eager to see it in practice, visited Sakhalin Island, where the notorious penal colony was located. The results of his thorough study of this "Mecca of human suffering" took the form of a workmanlike monograph entitled *Sakhalin*. The author was pleased with this work and particularly overjoyed to see some reforms actually brought about on the dreadful island as a result of its publication. "I am glad," he wrote, "that these stiff prison overalls hang in my literary wardrobe." There were other additions to the wardrobe. The spectacle of his fellow man in the last stages of degradation could not but affect Chekhov strongly; his few convict stories stemming from that period—among them *In Exile* with its ironic refrain of "Even in Siberia people live"—recapitulated the cold misery of prison life, under which there still miraculously survived a fugitive hope and a yearning for justice.

In 1891 we find him active in the work of famine relief, showing an unexpected organizing ability. The next year he was made honorary superintendent of his district in the fight against the cholera epidemic. In that same year he bought Melikhovo, a dilapidated estate near Mos-

cow, where he settled with his family and his two fat little dogs by the names of Bromide and Quinine and began to lead the life of a gentleman farmer. His kindheartedness made him very popular with the peasants, who could always count on him for financial or medical assistance. He built schools, assisted in the local administration, worked in the hospital, and at the same time gradually transformed his own place from a wilderness into a flourishing farm.

This sort of life with its beneficial blend of creativeness and social work seemed to relieve his depression, which was in large part due to his failing health. He enjoyed planting trees and rosebushes in his garden and imagining, like Colonel Vershinin in *The Three Sisters,* what they would look like in a hundred years; he liked accepting the traditional gift of bread and salt from his neighbors at the opening of the school in the nearby village. He personally went about taking the census for his district. The first-hand information he obtained gave him a deeper insight into the peasant's way of life and formed a basis for his short novels, *In the Ravine* and *The Peasants*. His implacably realistic treatment of the tremendous problem of the underprivileged was an ample answer to the critics who used to deplore what they called Chekhov's negative attitude to "the burning questions." He certainly softened no blows in these powerful stories, even drawing a protest from the Populists, a group of rather unrealistic liberals, who would have preferred a more romantic picture of the Russian peasant.

An important part of Chekhov's life in that period was his friendship with Count Leo Tolstoi. The evangelical sternness of Tolstoi's teachings, his uncompromising rejection of art and culture, were foreign to Chekhov's beauty-loving soul, much as he admired the Grand Old Man. Tolstoi, for his part, delighted in Chekhov's stories, preferring them to his plays, in which, he complained, there was not enough action. ("Where do your heroes ever get to? From the sofa where they are lying to the closet and back!") Chekhov was a frequent guest at the famous Yasnaya Polyana, and the two writers even planned to go to America together.

In 1897 the dread disease that had been smouldering unacknowl-

edged in Chekhov's body suddenly flared up and a severe hemorrhage sent him to the hospital. It is curious to find Chekhov, himself a doctor, stubbornly refusing to accept other doctors' diagnosis of his illness. He is never "ill," always "unwell": the telltale specks of blood on his handkerchiefs are carefully hidden from the anxious eyes of his parents. Nevertheless his secret preoccupation with his condition found expression in many of his works, among them the unforgettable *Black Monk*. The secret foe having come out in the open, Chekhov's peaceful existence in Melikhovo had to come to an end. The doctors sent him to Biarritz and Nice. He stayed a while in Paris, where he finally began to pay more attention to political and social questions. The Dreyfus affair stirred him deeply and his sympathies were captured by "that noble Zola," whose *J'accuse* came to him "like a breath of fresh air."

Back in Russia, Chekhov was forced to sell his beloved Melikhovo and to build a new home in Yalta. He felt his exile keenly: the molten blue Crimean skies, the murmur of the warm and drowsy sea, bored him to death. His family had broken up and he missed Moscow, for which he had a special affection and where he left his best friends. He tried to make his lonely existence more bearable by taking on a new responsibility, a new task, every day. With infinite pains he coaxed a garden out of the arid soil, jealously guarding every plant from the scorching sun. His best works, tales imbued with longing and a melancholy foreboding of death, were written in Yalta.

His one delight during these unhappy years was his "romance" with the Moscow Art Theater, "that beautiful oasis in the desert of banality," as he called it. The ambitious young dissidents, who preached the theory of "inward and outward truth" on the stage, had conceived the idea of reviving Chekhov's earlier play, *The Seagull*. This was done not without misgivings on the part of Chekhov, who still remembered vividly the failure of a previous production. Under the masterful direction of Stanislavski and Nemirovitch-Danchenko, the play was a fabulous success and ushered in a new phase in the history of the Russian stage. The Moscow Art Theater fell under the

spell of the Chekhovian mood, so perfectly suited to their own evocative style, in which the "unity of mood" replaced the unity of action. They adopted the seagull as their emblem and Chekhov as their playwright. They produced all the plays he wrote for them—that Russian version of Main Street, *The Three Sisters,* the wistful *Uncle Vanya,* the nostalgic *Cherry Orchard.*

In 1900 the whole group paid a visit to Chekhov in Yalta, mostly to enable the sick man to see their production of his plays, and he had the rare pleasure of seeing his characters come to life on the stage exactly as he had envisioned them. As a memento of their visit they left in his garden a pair of swings and a bench used in their production of *Uncle Vanya.* In 1902 Chekhov married Olga Leonardovna Knipper, a talented member of the group, who today bears the title of Honored Artist of the Soviet Union. After a brief honeymoon, however, the exigencies of the bride's profession and the groom's illness compelled the couple to live apart a good deal of the time—she in Moscow and he in the Crimea.

At the end it became obvious that nothing would improve Chekhov's declining health and he was allowed to spend a few months near Moscow. There, surrounded by the friends he valued—among them the "new" writers, Gorki, Bunin, and Kuprin—he wrote the last draft of his swan song, *The Cherry Orchard.* Thereafter he sank rapidly. In the summer of 1904 the doctors sent him to the Schwarzwald. A few weeks after coming to a small health resort by the name of Badenweiler, he died in his wife's arms, with the words *"Ich sterbe"* and the familiar expression of patient resignation on his lips.

Perhaps the best epitaph for this complex, sensitive, and gracious personality may be found in his own words: "In the next world I should like to be able to say this about our present life: that there were lovely visions in it."

LUCY M. CORES

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The Kiss

On the twentieth of May, at eight o'clock in the evening, six batteries of the N Artillery Brigade arrived at the village of Miestetchki to spend the night, before going to their camp.

The confusion was at its height—some officers at the guns, others in the church square with the quartermaster—when a civilian upon a remarkable horse rode from the rear of the church. The small cob with well-shaped neck wobbled along all the time dancing on its legs as if some one were whipping them. Reaching the officers the rider doffed his cap with ceremony and said—

"His Excellency, General von Rabbek, requests the honour of the officers' company at tea in his house nearby. . . .

The horse shook its head, danced, and wobbled backwards; its rider again took off his cap, and turning around disappeared behind the church.

"The devil!" the general exclaimed, the officers dispersing to their quarters. "We are almost asleep, yet along comes this von Rabbek with his tea! That tea! I remember it!"

The officers of the six batteries had vivid recollections of a past invitation. During recent manœuvres they had been asked, with their Cossack comrades, to tea at the house of a local country gentleman, a Count, retired from military service and this hearty, old Count overwhelmed them with attentions, fed them like gourmands, poured vodka into them and made them stay the night. All this, of course, was fine. The trouble was that the old soldier entertained his guests too well. He kept them up till daybreak while he poured forth tales of past adventures and pointed out valuable paintings, engravings, arms, and letters from celebrated men. And the tired officers listened, by force until he ended, only to find out then the time for sleep had gone.

Was von Rabbek another old Count? It might easily be. But there was no neglecting his invitation. The officers washed and dressed, and set out for von Rabbek's house. At the church square they learnt that they must descend the hill to the river, and follow the bank till they reached the general's gardens, where they would find a path direct to the house. Or, if they chose to go up hill, they would reach the general's barns half a verst from Miestetchki. It was this route they chose.

"But who is this von Rabbek?" asked one. "The man who commanded the N Cavalry Division at Plevna?"

"No, that was not von Rabbek, but simply Rabbe—without the von."

"What glorious weather!"

At the first barn they came to, two roads diverged; one ran straight forward and faded in the dusk; the other turning to the right led to the general's house. As the officers drew near they talked less loudly. To right and to left stretched rows of red-roofed brick barns, in aspect heavy and morose as the barracks of provincial towns. In front gleamed the lighted windows of von Rabbek's house.

"A good omen, gentlemen!" cried a young officer. Our setter runs in advance. There is game ahead!"

On the face of Lieutenant Lobuitko, the tall stout officer referred to, there was not one trace of hair though he was twenty-five years old. He was famed among comrades for the instinct which told him of the presence of women in the neighborhood. On hearing his comrade's remark, he turned his head and said—

"Yes. There are women there. My instinct tells me."

A handsome, well-preserved man of sixty, in mufti, came to the hall door to greet his guests. It was von Rabbek. As he pressed their hands, he explained that though he was delighted to see them, he must beg pardon for not asking them to spend the night; as guests he already had his two sisters, their children, his brother, and several neighbours—in fact, he had not one spare room. And though he shook their hands and apologised and smiled, it was plain that he was not half as glad to see them as was last year's Count, and that he had invited them merely because good manners demanded it. The officers climbing the soft-carpeted steps and listening to their host understood this perfectly well; and realised that they carried into the house an atmosphere of intrusion and alarm. Would any man—they asked themselves—who had gathered his two sisters and their children, his brother and his neighbours, to celebrate, no doubt, some family festival, find pleasure in the invasion of nineteen officers whom he had never seen before?

A tall elderly lady, with a good figure, and a long face with black eyebrows, who resembled closely the ex-Empress Eugenie, greeted them at the drawing-room door. Smiling courteously and with dignity, she affirmed that she was delighted to see the officers, and only regretted that she could not ask them to stay the night. But the courteous, dignified smile disappeared when she turned away, and it was quite plain that she had seen many officers in her day, that they caused not the slightest interest, and that she had invited them merely because an invitation was dictated by good breeding and by her position in the world.

In a big dining-room seated at a big table sat ten men and women, drinking tea. Behind them, veiled in cigar-smoke, stood several young men, among them one, red-whiskered and extremely thin, who spoke English loudly with a lisp. Through an open door the officers saw into a brightly lighted room with blue wall-paper.

"You are too many to introduce singly, gentlemen!" said the general loudly, with affected joviality. "Make one another's acquaintance, please—without formalities!"

The visitors, some with serious, even severe faces, some smiling constrainedly, all with a feeling of awkwardness, bowed, and took their seats at the table. Most awkward of all felt Staff-Captain Riabovitch, a short, round-shouldered, spectacled officer, whiskered like a lynx. While his brother officers looked serious or smiled constrainedly, his face, his lynx whiskers, and his spectacles seemed to explain: "I am the most timid, modest, undistinguished officer in the whole brigade." For some time after he took his seat at the table he could not fix his attention on any single thing. Faces, dresses, the cut-glass cognac bottles, the steaming tumblers, the moulded cornices—all merged in a single, overwhelming sentiment which caused him intense fright and made him wish to hide his head. Like an inexperienced

lecturer he saw everything before him, but could distinguish nothing, and was in fact the victim of what men of science diagnose as "physical blindness."

But, slowly conquering his diffidence, Riabovitch began to distinguish and observe. As became a man both timid and unsocial, he remarked first of all the amazing temerity of his new friends. Von Rabbek, his wife, two elderly ladies, a girl in lilac, and the red-whiskered youth who, it appeared, was a young von Rabbek, sat down among the officers as unconcernedly as if they had held rehearsals, and at once plunged into various heated arguments in which they soon involved their guests. That artillerists have a much better time than cavalrymen or infantrymen was proved conclusively by the lilac girl, while von Rabbek and the elderly ladies affirmed the converse. The conversation became desultory. Riabovitch listened to the lilac girl fiercely debating themes she knew nothing about and took no interest in, and watched the insincere smiles which appeared on and disappeared from her face.

While the von Rabbek family with amazing strategy inveigled their guests into the dispute, they kept their eyes on every glass and mouth. Had every one tea, was it sweet enough, why didn't one eat biscuits, was another fond of cognac? And the longer Riabovitch listened and looked, the more pleased he was with this disingenuous, disciplined family.

After tea the guests repaired to the drawing-room. Instinct had not cheated Lobuitko. The room was packed with young women and girls, and ere a minute had passed the setter-lieutenant stood beside a very young, fair-haired girl in black, and, bending down as if resting on an invisible sword, shrugged his shoulders coquettishly. He was uttering, no doubt, most unentertaining nonsense, for the fair girl looked indulgently at his sated face, and exclaimed indifferently, "Indeed!" And this indifferent "Indeed!" might have quickly convinced the setter that he was on a wrong scent.

Music began. As the notes of a mournful valse throbbed out of the open window, through the heads of all flashed the feeling that outside that window it was spring-time, a night of May. The air was odorous of young poplar leaves, of roses and lilacs—and the valse and the spring were sincere. Riabovitch, with valse and cognac mingling tipsily in his head, gazed at the window with a smile; then began to follow the movements of the women; and it seemed that the smell of roses, poplars, and lilacs came not from the gardens outside, but from the women's faces and dresses.

They began to dance. Young von Rabbek valsed twice round the room with a very thin girl; and Lobuitko, slipping on the parquetted floor, went up to the girl in lilac, and was granted a dance. But Riabovitch stood near the door with the wall-flowers, and looked silently on. Amazed at the daring of men who in sight of a crowd could take unknown women by the waist, he tried in vain to picture himself doing the same. A time had been when he envied his comrades their courage and dash, suffered from painful heart-searchings, and was hurt by the knowledge that he was timid, round-shouldered, and undistinguished, that he had lynx whiskers, and that his waist was much too long. But with years he had grown reconciled

to his own insignificance, and now looking at the dancers and loud talkers, he felt no envy, but only mournful emotions.

At the first quadrille von Rabbek junior approached and invited two non-dancing officers to a game of billiards. The three left the room; and Riabovitch, who stood idle, and felt impelled to join in the general movement, followed. They passed the dining-room, traversed a narrow glazed corridor, and a room where three sleepy footmen jumped from a sofa with a start; and after walking, it seemed, through a whole houseful of rooms, entered a small billiard-room.

Von Rabbek and the two officers began their game. Riabovitch, whose only game was cards, stood near the table and looked indifferently on, as the players, with unbuttoned coats, wielded their cues, moved about, joked, and shouted obscure technical terms. Riabovitch was ignored, save when one of the players jostled him or caught his cue, and turning towards him said briefly, "Pardon!" so that before the game was over he was thoroughly bored, and, impressed by a sense of his superfluity, resolved to return to the drawing-room, and turned away.

It was on the way back that his adventure took place. Before he had gone far he saw that he had missed his way. He remembered distinctly the room with the three sleepy footmen; and after passing through five or six rooms entirely vacant, he saw his mistake. Retracing his steps, he turned to the left, and found himself in an almost dark room which he had not seen before; and after hesitating a minute, he boldly opened the first door he saw, and found himself in complete darkness. Through a chink of the door in front peered a bright light; from afar throbbed the dullest music of a mournful mazurka. Here, as in the drawing-room, the windows were open wide, and the smell of poplars, lilacs, and roses flooded the air.

Riabovitch paused in irresolution. For a moment all was still. Then came the sound of hasty footsteps; then, without any warning of what was to come, a dress rustled, a woman's breathless voice whispered "At last!" and two soft, scented, unmistakably womanly arms met round his neck, a warm cheek impinged on his, and he received a sounding kiss. But hardly had the kiss echoed through the silence when the unknown shrieked loudly, and fled away—as it seemed to Riabovitch—in disgust. Riabovitch himself nearly screamed, and rushed headlong towards the bright beam in the door-chink.

As he entered the drawing-room his heart beat violently, and his hands trembled so perceptibly that he clasped them behind his back. His first emotion was shame, as if every one in the room already knew that he had just been embraced and kissed. He retired into his shell, and looked fearfully around. But finding that hosts and guests were calmly dancing or talking, he regained courage, and surrendered himself to sensations experienced for the first time in life. The unexampled had happened. His neck, fresh from the embrace of two soft, scented arms, seemed anointed with oil; near his left moustache, where the kiss had fallen, trembled a slight, delightful chill, as from peppermint drops; and from head to foot he was soaked in new and extraordinary sensations, which continued to grow and grow.

He felt that he must dance, talk, run into the garden, laugh unrestrainedly. He forgot altogether that he was round-shouldered, undistinguished, lynx-whiskered, that he had an "indefinite exterior"—a description from the lips of a woman he had happened to overhear. As Madame von Rabbek passed him he smiled so broadly and graciously that she came up and looked at him questioningly.

"What a charming house you have!" he said, straightening his spectacles.

And Madame von Rabbek smiled back, said that the house still belonged to her father, and asked were his parents still alive, how long he had been in the Army, and why he was so thin. After hearing his answers she departed. But though the conversation was over, he continued to smile benevolently, and think what charming people were his new acquaintances.

At supper Riabovitch ate and drank mechanically what was put before him, heard not a word of the conversation, and devoted all his powers to the unravelling of his mysterious, romantic adventure. What was the explanation? It was plain that one of the girls, he reasoned, had arranged a meeting in the dark room, and after waiting some time in vain had, in her nervous tension, mistaken Riabovitch for her hero. The mistake was likely enough, for on entering the dark room Riabovitch had stopped irresolutely as if he, too, were waiting for some one. So far the mystery was explained.

"But which of them was it?" he asked, searching the women's faces. She certainly was young, for old women do not indulge in such romances. Secondly, she was not a servant. That was proved unmistakably by the rustle of her dress, the scent, the voice. . . .

When at first he looked at the girl in lilac she pleased him; she had pretty shoulders and arms, a clever face, a charming voice. Riabovitch piously prayed that it was she. But, smiling insincerely, she wrinkled her long nose, and that at once gave her an elderly air. So Riabovitch turned his eyes on the blonde in black. The blonde was younger, simpler, sincerer; she had charming kiss-curls, and drank from her tumbler with inexpressible grace. Riabovitch hoped it was she—but soon he noticed that her face was flat, and bent his eyes on her neighbour.

"It is a hopeless puzzle," he reflected. "If you take the arms and shoulders of the lilac girl, add the blonde's curls, and the eyes of the girl on Lobuitko's left, then——"

He composed a portrait of all these charms, and had a clear vision of the girl who had kissed him. But she was nowhere to be seen.

Supper over, the visitors, sated and tipsy, bade their entertainers good-bye. Both host and hostess again apologised for not asking them to spend the night.

"I am very glad, gentlemen!" said the general, and this time seemed to speak sincerely, no doubt because speeding the parting guest is a kindlier office than welcoming him unwelcomed. "I am very glad indeed! I hope you will visit me on your way back. Without ceremony, please! Which way will you go? Up the hill? No, go down the hill and through the garden. That way is shorter."

The officers took his advice. After the noise and glaring illumination within doors, the garden seemed dark and still. Until they reached the wicket-gate all

kept silence. Merry, half tipsy, and content, as they were, the night's obscurity and stillness inspired pensive thought. Through their brains, as though Riabovitch's, sped probably the same question: "Will the time ever come when I, like von Rabbek, shall have a big house, a family, a garden, the chance of being gracious—even insincerely—to others, of making them sated, tipsy, and content?"

But once the garden lay behind them, all spoke at once, and burst into causeless laughter. The path they followed led straight to the river, and then ran beside it, winding around bushes, ravines, and over-hanging willow-trees. The track was barely visible; the other bank was lost entirely in gloom. Sometimes the black water imaged stars, and this was the only indication of the river's speed. From beyond it sighed a drowsy snipe, and beside them in a bush, heedless of the crowd, a nightingale chanted loudly. The officers gathered in a group, and swayed the bush, but the nightingale continued his song.

"I like his cheek!" they echoed admiringly. "He doesn't care a kopeck! The old rogue!"

Near their journey's end the path turned up the hill, and joined the road not far from the church enclosure; and there the officers, breathless from climbing, sat on the grass and smoked. Across the river gleamed a dull red light, and for want of a subject they argued the problem, whether it was a bonfire, a window-light, or something else. Riabovitch looked also at the light, and felt that it smiled and winked at him as if it knew about the kiss.

On reaching home, he undressed without delay, and lay upon his bed. He shared the cabin with Lobuitko and a Lieutenant Merzliakoff, a staid, silent little man, by repute highly cultivated, who took with him everywhere *The Messenger of Europe,* and read it eternally. Lobuitko undressed, tramped impatiently from corner to corner, and sent his servant for beer. Merzliakoff lay down, balanced the candle on his pillow, and hid his head behind *The Messenger of Europe.*

"Where is she now?" muttered Riabovitch, looking at the soot-blacked ceiling.

His neck still seemed anointed with oil, near his mouth still trembled the speck of peppermint chill. Through his brain twinkled successively the shoulders and arms of the lilac girl, the kiss-curls and honest eyes of the girl in black, the waists, dresses, brooches. But though he tried his best to fix these vagrant images, they glimmered, winked, and dissolved; and as they faded finally into the vast black curtain which hangs before the closed eyes of all men, he began to hear hurried footsteps, the rustle of petticoats, the sound of a kiss. A strong, causeless joy possessed him. But as he surrendered himself to this joy, Lobuitko's servant returned with the news that no beer was obtainable. The lieutenant resumed his impatient march up and down the room.

"The fellow's an idiot," he exclaimed, stopping first near Riabovitch and then near Merzliakoff. "Only the worst numbskull and blockhead can't get beer! *Canaille!*"

"Every one knows there's no beer here," said Merzliakoff, without lifting his eyes from *The Messenger of Europe.*

"You believe that!" exclaimed Lobuitko. "Lord in heaven, drop me on the moon, and in five minutes I'll find

both beer and women! I will find them myself! Call me a rascal if I don't!"

He dressed slowly, silently lighted a cigarette, and went out.

"Rabbek, Grabbek, Labbek," he muttered, stopping in the hall. "I won't go alone, devil take me! Riabovitch, come for a walk! What?"

As he got no answer, he returned, undressed slowly, and lay down. Merzliakoff sighed, dropped *The Messenger of Europe,* and put out the light. "Well?" muttered Lobuitko, puffing his cigarette in the dark.

Riabovitch pulled the bed-clothes up to his chin, curled himself into a roll, and strained his imagination to join the twinkling images into one coherent whole. But the vision fled him. He soon fell asleep, and his last impression was that he had been caressed and gladdened, that into his life had crept something strange, and indeed ridiculous, but uncommonly good and radiant. And this thought did not forsake him even in his dreams.

When he awoke the feeling of anointment and peppermint chill were gone. But joy, as on the night before, filled every vein. He looked entranced at the window-panes gilded by the rising sun, and listened to the noises outside. Some one spoke loudly under the very window. It was Lebedietsky, commander of his battery, who had just overtaken the brigade. He was talking to the sergeant-major, loudly, owing to lack of practice in soft speech.

"And what next?" he roared.

"During yesterday's shoeing, your honour, *Golubtchik* was pricked. The *feldscher* ordered clay and vinegar. And last night, your honour, mechanic Artemieff was drunk, and the lieutenant ordered him to be put on the limber of the reserve gun-carriage."

The sergeant-major added that Karpoff had forgotten the tent-pegs and the new lanyards for the friction-tubes, and that the officers had spent the evening at General von Rabbek's. But here at the window appeared Lebedietsky's red-bearded face. He blinked his short-sighted eyes at the drowsy men in bed, and greeted them.

"Is everything all right?"

"The saddle wheeler galled his withers with the new yoke," answered Lobuitko.

The commander sighed, mused a moment, and shouted—

"I am thinking of calling on Alexandra Yegorovna. I want to see her. Good-bye! I will catch you up before night."

Fifteen minutes later the brigade resumed its march. As he passed von Rabbek's barns Riabovitch turned his head and looked at the house. The venetian blinds were down; evidently all still slept. And among them slept she—she who had kissed him but a few hours before. He tried to visualise her asleep. He projected the bedroom window opened wide with green branches peering in, the freshness of the morning air, the smell of poplars, lilacs, and roses, the bed, a chair, the dress which rustled last night, a pair of tiny slippers, a ticking watch on the table—all these came to him clearly with every detail. But the features, the kind, sleepy smile—all, in short, that was essential and characteristic—fled his imagination as quicksilver flees the hand. When he had covered half a verst he again turned back. The yellow church, the house, gardens, and river were bathed in light. Imaging an azure sky, the green-banked

river specked with silver sunshine flakes was inexpressibly fair; and, looking at Miestetchki for the last time, Riabovitch felt sad, as if parting forever with something very near and dear.

By the road before him stretched familiar, uninteresting scenes; to the right and left, fields of young rye and buckwheat with hopping rooks; in front, dust and the napes of human necks; behind, the same dust and faces. Ahead of the column marched four soldiers with swords—that was the advance guard. Next came the bandsmen. Advance guard and bandsmen, like mutes in a funeral procession, ignored the regulation intervals and marched too far ahead. Riabovitch, with the first gun of Battery No. 5, could see four batteries ahead.

To a layman, the long, lumbering march of an artillery brigade is novel, interesting, inexplicable. It is hard to understand why a single gun needs so many men; why so many, such strangely harnessed horses are needed to drag it. But to Riabovitch, a master of all these things, it was profoundly dull. He had learned years ago why a solid sergeant-major rides beside the officer in front of each battery; why the sergeant-major is called the *unosni,* and why the drivers of leaders and wheelers ride behind him. Riabovitch knew why the near horses are called saddle-horses, and why the off horses are called led-horses—and all of this was uninteresting beyond words. On one of the wheelers rode a soldier still covered with yesterday's dust, and with a cumbersome, ridiculous guard on his right leg. But Riabovitch, knowing the use of this leg-guard, found it in no way ridiculous. The drivers, mechanically and with occasional cries, flourished their whips. The guns in themselves were unimpressive. The limbers were packed with tarpaulin-covered sacks of oats; and the guns themselves, hung round with tea-pots and satchels, looked like harmless animals, guarded for some obscure reason by men and horses. In the lee of the gun tramped six gunners, swinging their arms, and behind each gun came more *unosniye,* leaders, wheelers; and yet more guns, each as ugly and uninspiring as the one in front. And as every one of the six batteries in the brigade had four guns, the procession stretched along the road at least half a verst. It ended with a waggon train, with which, its head bent in thought, walked the donkey Magar, brought from Turkey by a battery commander.

Dead to his surroundings, Riabovitch marched onward, looking at the napes ahead or at the faces behind. Had it not been for last night's event, he would have been half asleep. But now he was absorbed in novel, entrancing thoughts. When the brigade set out that morning he had tried to argue that the kiss had no significance save as a trivial though mysterious adventure; that it was without real import; and that to think of it seriously was to behave himself absurdly. But logic soon flew away and surrendered him to his vivid imaginings. At times he saw himself in von Kabbek's dining-room, *tête-à-tête* with a composite being, formed of the girl in lilac and the blonde in black. At times he closed his eyes, and pictured himself with a different, this time quite an unknown, girl of cloudy feature; he spoke to her, caressed her, bent over her shoulder; he imagined war and parting . . . then reunion, the first supper together, children. . . .

"To the brakes!" rang the command as they topped the brow of each hill.

Riabovitch also cried "To the brakes!" and each time dreaded that the cry would break the magic spell, and recall him to realities.

They passed a big country house. Riabovitch looked across the fence into the garden, and saw a long path, straight as a ruler, carpeted with yellow sand, and shaded by young birches. In an ecstasy of enchantment, he pictured little feminine feet treading the yellow sand; and, in a flash, imagination restored the woman who had kissed him, the woman he had visualised after supper the night before. The image settled in his brain and never afterwards forsook him.

The spell reigned until midday, when a loud command came from the rear of the column.

"Attention! Eyes right! Officers!"

In a *calèche* drawn by a pair of white horses appeared the general of brigade. He stopped at the second battery, and called out something which no one understood. Up galloped several officers, among them Riabovitch.

"Well, how goes it?" The general blinked his red eyes, and continued, "Are there any sick?"

Hearing the answer, the little skinny general mused a moment, turned to an officer, and said—

"The driver of your third-gun wheeler has taken off his leg-guard and hung it on the limber. *Canaille!* Punish him!"

Then raising his eyes to Riabovitch, he added—

"And in your battery, I think, the harness is too loose."

Having made several other equally tiresome remarks, he looked at Lobuitko, and laughed.

"Why do you look so downcast, Lieutenant Lobuitko? You are sighing for Madame Lopukhoff, eh? Gentlemen, he is pining for Madame Lopukhoff!"

Madame Lopukhoff was a tall, stout lady, long past forty. Being partial to big women, regardless of age, the general ascribed the same taste to his subordinates. The officers smiled respectfully; and the general, pleased that he had said something caustic and laughable, touched the coachman's back and saluted. The *calèche* whirled away.

"All this, though it seems to me impossible and unearthly, is in reality very commonplace," thought Riabovitch, watching the clouds of dust raised by the general's carriage. "It is an everyday event, and within every one's experience. . . . This old general, for instance, must have loved in his day; he is married now, and has children. Captain Wachter is also married, and his wife loves him, though he has an ugly red neck and no waist. . . . Salmanoff is coarse, and a typical Tartar, but he has had a romance ending in marriage. . . . I, like the rest, must go through it all sooner or later."

And the thought that he was an ordinary man, and that his life was ordinary, rejoiced and consoled him. He boldly visualized *her* and his happiness, and let his imagination run mad.

Towards evening the brigade ended its march. While the other officers sprawled in their tents, Riabovitch, Merzliakoff, and Lobuitko sat round a packing-case and supped. Merzliakoff ate slowly, and, resting *The Messenger of Europe* on his knees, read on steadily. Lobuitko, chattering without cease, poured beer into

his glass. But Riabovitch, whose head was dizzy from uninterrupted day-dreams, ate in silence. When he had drunk three glasses he felt tipsy and weak; and an overmastering impulse forced him to relate his adventure to his comrades.

"A most extraordinary thing happened to me at von Rabbek's," he began, doing his best to speak in an indifferent, ironical tone. "I was on my way, you understand, from the billiard-room . . ."

And he attempted to give a very detailed history of the kiss. But in a minute he had told the whole story. In that minute he had exhausted every detail; and it seemed to him terrible that the story required such a short time. It ought, he felt, to have lasted all the night. As he finished, Lobuitko, who as a liar himself believed in no one, laughed incredulously. Merzliakoff frowned, and, with his eyes still glued to *The Messenger of Europe,* said indifferently—

"God knows who it was! She threw herself on your neck, you say, and didn't cry out! Some lunatic, I expect!"

"It must have been a lunatic," agreed Riabovitch.

"I, too, have had adventures of that kind," began Lobuitko, making a frightened face. "I was on my way to Kovno. I travelled second class. The carriage was packed, and I couldn't sleep. So I gave the guard a rouble, and he took my bag, and put me in a *coupé.* I lay down, and pulled my rug over me. It was pitch dark, you understand. Suddenly I felt some one tapping my shoulder and breathing in my face. I stretched out my hand, and felt an elbow. Then I opened my eyes. Imagine! A woman! Coal-black eyes, lips red as good coral, nostrils breathing passion, breasts—buffers!"

"Draw it mild!" interrupted Merzliakoff in his quiet voice. "I can believe about the breasts, but if it was pitch dark how could you see the lips?"

By laughing at Merzliakoff's lack of understanding, Lobuitko tried to shuffle out of the dilemma. The story annoyed Riabovitch. He rose from the box, lay on his bed, and swore that he would never again take any one into his confidence.

Life in camp passed without event. The days flew by, each like the one before. But on every one of these days Riabovitch felt, thought, and acted as a man in love. When at daybreak his servant brought him cold water, and poured it over his head, it flashed at once into his half-awakened brain that something good and warm and caressing had crept into his life.

At night when his comrades talked of love and of women, he drew in his chair, and his face was the face of an old soldier who talks of battles in which he has taken part. And when the rowdy officers, led by setter Lobuitko, made Don Juanesque raids upon the neighbouring "suburb," Riabovitch, though he accompanied them, was morose and conscience-struck, and mentally asked *her* forgiveness. In free hours and sleepless nights, when his brain was obsessed by memories of childhood, of his father, his mother, of everything akin and dear, he remembered always Miestetchki, the dancing horse, von Rabbek, von Rabbek's wife, so like the ex-Empress Eugenie, the dark room, the chink in the door.

On the thirty-first of August he left camp, this time not with the whole brigade but with only two batteries. As

an exile returning to his native land, he was agitated and enthralled by day-dreams. He longed passionately for the queer-looking horse, the church, the insincere von Rabbeks, the dark room; and that internal voice which cheats so often the love-lorn whispered an assurance that he should see *her* again. But doubt tortured him. How should he meet her? What must he say? Would she have forgotten the kiss? If it came to the worst—he consoled himself—if he never saw her again, he might walk once more through the dark room, and remember. . . .

Towards evening the white barns and well-known church rose on the horizon. Riabovitch's heart beat wildly. He ignored the remark of an officer who rode by, he forgot the whole world, and he gazed greedily at the river glimmering afar, at the green roofs, at the dove-cote, over which fluttered birds, dyed golden by the setting sun.

As he rode towards the church, and heard again the quartermaster's raucous voice, he expected every second a horseman to appear from behind the fence and invite the officers to tea. . . . But the quartermaster ended his harangue, the officers hastened to the village, and no horseman appeared.

"When Rabbek hears from the peasants that we are back he will send for us," thought Riabovitch. And so assured was he of this, that when he entered the hut he failed to understand why his comrades had lighted a candle, and why the servants were preparing the samovar.

A painful agitation oppressed him. He lay on his bed. A moment later he rose to look for the horseman. But no horseman was in sight. Again he lay down; again he rose; and this time, impelled by restlessness, went into the street, and walked towards the church. The square was dark and deserted. On the hill stood three silent soldiers. When they saw Riabovitch they started and saluted, and he, returning their salute, began to descend the well-remembered path.

Beyond the stream, in a sky stained with purple, the moon slowly rose. Two chattering peasant women walked in a kitchen garden and pulled cabbage leaves; behind them their log cabins stood out black against the sky. The river bank was as it had been in May; the bushes were the same; things differed only in that the nightingale no longer sang, that it smelt no longer of poplars and young grass.

When he reached von Rabbek's garden Riabovitch peered through the wicket-gate. Silence and darkness reigned. Save only the white birch trunks and patches of pathway, the whole garden merged in a black, impenetrable shade. Riabovitch listened greedily, and gazed intent. For a quarter of an hour he loitered; then hearing no sound, and seeing no light, he walked wearily towards home.

He went down to the river. In front rose the general's bathing-box; and white towels hung on the rail of the bridge. He climbed on to the bridge and stood still; then, for no reason whatever, touched a towel. It was clammy and cold. He looked down at the river which sped past swiftly, murmuring almost inaudibly against the bathing-box piles. Near the left bank glowed the moon's ruddy reflection, overrun by ripples which stretched it, tore it in two, and, it seemed, would sweep it away as twigs and shavings are swept.

"How stupid! How stupid!" thought

Riabovitch, watching the hurrying ripples. "How stupid everything is!"

Now that hope was dead, the history of the kiss, his impatience, his ardour, his vague aspirations and disillusion appeared in a clear light. It no longer seemed strange that the general's horseman had not come, and that he would never again see *her* who had kissed him by accident instead of another. On the contrary, he felt, it would be strange if he did ever see her again. . . .

The water flew past him, whither and why no one knew. It had flown past in May; it had sped a stream into a great river; a river, into the sea; it had floated on high in mist and fallen again in rain; it might be, the water of May was again speeding past under Riabovitch's eyes. For what purpose? Why?

And the whole world—life itself—seemed to Riabovitch an inscrutabl aimless mystification. . . . Raising h eyes from the stream and gazing at th sky, he recalled how Fate in the shap of an unknown woman had once caresse him; he recalled his summer fantasie and images—and his whole life seeme to him unnaturally thin and colourles and wretched. . . .

When he reached the cabin his com rades had disappeared. His servant in formed him that all had set out to vis "General Fonrabbkin," who had sent horseman to bring them. . . . For a mo ment Riabovitch's heart thrilled wit joy. But that joy he extinguished. H cast himself upon his bed, and wrot with his evil fate, as if he wished t spite it, ignored the invitation.

The Chorus Girl

All this happened long ago. She was younger and nicer in those days. Nikolai Petrowitch Kolpakow, her admirer, was visiting her in her country home. It was unbearably hot and humid. Kolpakow had finished his noonday meal, and had drunk a whole bottle of bad port wine; he did not feel very well and was in bad mood. Both were bored, waiting for the cooler evening to take a walk.

Suddenly the doorbell rang. Kolpakow was in his shirt sleeves. He jumped up from his seat and looked questioningly at Pasha.

"Maybe it is the letter carrier, or perhaps a girl friend," said the actress.

Kolpakow didn't mind in the least Pasha's girl friends nor the letter carrier. But to be sure he picked up his coat and went into the next room while Pash went out to open the door.

To her great surprise it was not th letter carrier, nor one of her friend but a young and beautiful lady, hand somely dressed in a refined style; sh looked like a "good" woman.

The stranger was pale and breathin heavily as if she had ascended severa flights of stairs.

"What is it you wish?" asked Pasha.

The lady did not answer immediatel She entered the room, glanced with cu rious looks over the furniture. She ap peared to be in pain. It was some tim before she had composed herself an was able to speak. She took a seat.

"Is my husband here?" she aske

finally, raising her eyes which were red from crying.

"Whose husband?" asked Pasha, and she became suddenly so frightened that her hands and feet grew cold. "Whose husband?" she repeated, trembling with emotion.

"My husband, Nikolai Petrowitch Kolpakow."

"No, . . . madam . . . I . . . I never knew a husband."

A few minutes of silence elapsed. The lady repeatedly wiped her eyes with a lace handkerchief. Pasha had not dared to sit down. She looked at her visitor, frightened and helpless.

"You maintain then that he is not here?" asked the lady with a firm voice and a curious smile.

"I . . . I do not know what you mean."

"You vulgar low woman . . ." murmured the lady, looking with hatred and contempt at Pasha. "Yes, yes . . . you are a vulgar woman and I am happy, very happy that I have finally a chance to tell you so face to face!"

Pasha felt that she must have impressed this lady in black very vulgarly and she began to be ashamed of her painted red cheeks, of the freckles that covered her nose and the bangs flowing gaily over her forehead. It seemed to her that if she had happened to be slender without paint and powder and bangs it would have been easier for her to conceal that she was a "bad" woman. She could have met her on equal terms, and she would even have dared to sit on the chair on the other side of the table.

"Where is my husband?" asked the lady again. "But it does not matter whether he is here or not. I simply want to tell you that embezzlements have been discovered and that they are looking for Nikolai Petrowitch. They are going to arrest him. And that is your work!"

The lady arose and paced the room in great excitement. Pasha looked at her in astonishment. She could not grasp what all this meant.

"Today he will be found and arrested," said the lady, crying and sobbing. "I know who led him on to all this, you vulgar ugly woman! You low creature," her face expressed the contempt she felt for Pasha. It looked as if she would spit in her face the next moment. "I am powerless . . . Do you hear me, you beastly woman? . . . I am helpless, you are stronger than I am, but there is One who is going to take care of me and my children! God sees everything! He is just! He will repay you for all my tears, all my sleepless nights! The time will come when you will remember me!"

Again there was a long silence. The lady walked up and down while Pasha stared at her! she could not understand and expected momently that something dreadful would happen.

"I know nothing of all this, madam," she said, and commenced to cry heart-breakingly.

"You lie!" cried the lady. "I know everything. I have known you for a long while. I know that there has not been a day during the last four months that he did not spend with you!"

"Yes? And what of is? What is there wrong in that? A good many come to see me and to visit with me. I do not urge them to come. They come of their own free will."

"I am telling you that they have discovered an embezzlement. He stole money from his office. For your sake . . . for the sake of such a woman as

you are he committed a crime. Listen," resumed the lady very decisively stopping squarely in front of Pasha. "You cannot have principles, you who live only to wrong others. That is all that you desire. But I cannot believe that you are such a low woman that you have even lost your last spark of humanity. He has a wife, he has children . . . If they sentence him and send him to Siberia, I and the children must starve . . . try to understand this! But still there remains one way to save us from misery and dishonor. If I can make good and deposit today nine hundred rubles, he will not be prosecuted. Nine hundred rubles only!"

"Nine hundred rubles?" asked Pasha quietly. "I don't know anything about nine hundred rubles. I haven't received them."

"I do not beg of you nine hundred rubles. You have no money and I do not need your money. I ask for something entirely different. . . . Men are in the habit of giving girls like you jewelry. Return to me the things my husband gave you!"

"He never gave me jewelry, madam," cried Pasha, who had begun to understand.

"Where is the money? He has squandered his own, mine and other people's money. . . . Listen, I beg of you! I have been overcome by all this and I called you a great many unpleasant things but I beg you to forgive me. You must hate me, I know it. And if you are capable of pity, try to put yourself into my own place. I implore you, give me back those things!"

"Hm . . ." said Pasha, and shrugged her shoulders. "I would do so with pleasure but may God punish me if he ever gave me presents. Please do believe me. But you are right," the actress corrected herself embarrassedly, "once he brought me these two things—I gladly give them back to you if you wish them. . . ."

Pasha opened the drawer of her dresser and handed to her visitor a thin gold bracelet and a little ring with a red stone.

The lady flushed and every muscle in her face seemed to vibrate. She was offended.

"What are you giving me?" she said! "I do not ask for alms, but for that which is not yours, what you induced my husband, the poor unhappy creature, to give you, you who know how to take advantage of such situations. Thursday as I met you with my husband on the Avenue, you wore expensive brooches and rings. You don't need to play for my benefit the part of an innocent lamb. For the last time I ask of you, will you return those things to me or not?"

"How comical you are . . ." said Pasha, who felt quite offended. "I assure you that your Nikolai Petrowitch never gave me anything but this bracelet and this ring. He brought only cake——"

"Cake . . ." laughed the lady in a strangely shrill voice, "at home the children have nothing to bite and here you feast on cake. So you refuse to return to me those things?"

She did not receive an answer. She seated herself in a comfortable rocking-chair and looked fixedly at one point evidently thinking rapidly.

"What shall I do?" she said, "if I don't get this nine hundred rubles he is lost and I and the children with him. Shall I kill this monster, or shall I throw myself on my knees before her?"

The lady pressed the handkerchief to her face and started to cry.

"I beg of you," she sobbed, "you have ruined my husband and wrecked his life, do save him. . . . I know you do not feel pity for him, but the children, think of the children. . . . Why should those innocent children suffer so?"

Pasha thought of those little children, standing on a street corner crying with hunger, and she herself started to cry.

"What can I do, dear lady?" she asked with a gesture of helplessness. "You say that I am a beast, and that I wrecked Nikolai Petrowitch. But I swear to you before God that I never had any financial advantages from him. In our chorus Motja is the only one who has a rich lover. We others are starving half the time. Nikolai Petrowitch is a fine and well dressed gentleman, and so I received him. We cannot be very fastidious in our choice. . . ."

"I am asking you for those things! Give them to me. I am crying . . . I am lowering myself. If you wish me to do so, I will throw myself at your feet. Please! . . . Please?"

Pasha screamed in fright. She felt that this beautiful lady who was talking like the leading woman in the theater was ready to kneel before her in her pride, in her nobility, in order to humiliate herself and to humiliate the actress.

"Very well, then, I shall give you the things!" exclaimed Pasha huskily, drying her tears. "Here, please. They are not from Nikolai Petrowitch. I received them from other gentlemen. But as you please. . . ."

Pasha again opened the drawer of her dresser and handed to the lady a diamond brooch, several rings and several necklaces.

"Take this, take these too, and take these, though from your husband I have never received anything. Here, take them all, and make yourself rich!" continued Pasha, offended by the threatened prostration at her feet.

"But if you are such a fine lady . . . his own wife, better try to keep him with you. I surely did not call him. He came himself."

The lady looked through her tears over the jewelry spread on the table and said: "This is not all . . . these things are not even worth five hundred rubles."

Pasha went again to the dresser and quickly threw a gold watch, a cigarette case and a pair of cuff buttons with the other things. She spoke now very resolutely: "I have no more . . . you can look for yourself!"

The lady sighed, gathered the things with trembling hands in her handkerchief, and walked out. She did not say a word, she did not even nod her head.

The door to the next room opened and in came Kolpakow. He was pale and he shook his head nervously as if he had taken a bitter drink. In his eyes glistened tears.

"What are those things that you are supposed to have given me?" Pasha turned on him. "When, if I may ask, did you give me these things?"

"Things. . . . Nonsense!" answered Kolpakow, shaking his head. "My God, she has cried before you; she has humiliated herself. . . .

"I ask you, what are these presents that you are supposed to have given me?" screamed Pasha.

"My God, she, the pure, the noble,

the proud woman. . . . at the feet of this creature she would even have thrown herself! My doings have brought her to this! I have permitted it."

He grasped his head with his hands and groaned:

"Never, never shall I forgive myself. Never. Begone, you beast," and he looked with contempt at Pasha, while his trembling hands thrust her far away from him. "She wanted to throw herself upon her knees and . . . before whom? Before you! Oh, my God!"

He dressed himself quickly. He carefully avoided touching Pasha and left the house.

Pasha threw herself in a chair and cried loudly. She was sorry that she had given away her jewelry. The whole scene was offensive. She recalled how a merchant had beaten her three years ago, for no reason, and she cried much louder.

La Cigale

CHAPTER I

OLGA'S HUSBAND

At Olga Ivanovna's wedding, all who knew her were present.

"Look at him. He has something about him!" she said to her friends, pointing to her husband, seeming to wish to explain why she had married an ordinary man, who had nothing about him.

Her husband, Osip Stepanovich Dymov, was a doctor and had the title of titular councillor. On the staffs of two hospitals: in one a supernumerary house-surgeon and in the other the dissector. From nine o'clock until midday he was daily occupied in his ward or in receiving patients, and after he went by tram to the other hospital, where he dissected corpses. A small private practice produced about five hundred roubles per year. That was all. What else can be said about him? While Olga Ivanovna and her good friends and acquaintances were remarkable in some manner, they all were considered celebrities, or if they were not so in fact, they all showed brilliant potentialities. There was an actor from the dramatic theatre, a man of great, and long since recognized, talent, an elegant, clever and modest man, an excellent reader, who taught Olga Ivanovna elocution; a singer from the opera, a fat, good-natured man, who with a sigh told Olga Ivanovna that she was ruining herself: "If she were not so lazy, and only took herself properly in hand, she would become a remarkable singer"; then there were several painters, headed by Ryabovsky, who painted genre, animal and landscape pictures. He was a very good-looking, fair-haired young man of about twenty-five, who had had success at exhibitions and had sold his last picture for five hundred roubles. He corrected Olga Ivanovna's sketches and said perhaps something could be made of her; then there was also the violoncellist whose instrument wailed, and who asserted quite openly that of all the women of his acquaintance only

Olga Ivanovna knew how to accompany him; then there was the literary man, who was already well known for the novels, tales and plays he had written. Who was there besides? Well, yes, there was also Vasily Vasilich, a gentleman-landowner, a dilettante illustrator and maker of vignettes, who felt acutely the ancient Russian style of the Byliny and Epics, and who produced really wonderful things on paper, china and smoked plates. For this group of artistic and free young people—all so spoiled by fate, but who still were delicate and modest, and who only remembered the existence of doctors at the time of illness—the name of Dymov sounded as meaningless as Sidorov or Tarasov. In the midst of this society Dymov himself felt strange, superfluous and small, though he was tall and broad-shouldered. It appeared to them as if he were in another man's dress-coat, and that he had the beard of an office clerk. However, if he had been a writer or an artist, they would have said that with his beard he reminded them of Zola.

The artist told Olga Ivanovna that with her flaxen hair and her bridal attire she was very like a graceful cherry tree, when in spring it is entirely covered with delicate white blossoms.

"No, just listen!" Olga Ivanovna said, seizing his hand. "How do you think all this happened? Listen, listen! . . . I must tell you that my father worked together with Dymov in the same hospital. When my poor father fell ill, Dymov passed whole days and nights beside his bed. What self-sacrifice! Listen, Ryabovsky. . . . And you, author, listen too, it is quite interesting. Come nearer. What self-sacrifice, what sincere interest! I also did not sleep at night, but sat near father's bed, and suddenly, lo and behold, the good young man was conquered! My Dymov fell over head and ears in love. Truly fate is very strange! Well, after my father's death he came to see me from time to time, we met in the street, and one fine evening suddenly—bang!—he proposed. . . . It was quite unexpected. . . . I cried all night and fell desperately in love. And as you see, I've become a wife. Isn't it true there's something strong, powerful, bearlike in him? Now his face is turned only three-quarters towards us, and it's badly lighted, but when he turns quite this way just notice his forehead. Ryabovsky, what do you think of that forehead? Dymov, we are talking about you!" she called to him. "Come here. Stretch out your honest hand to Ryabovsky. . . . So. Be friends . . ."

Dymov, smiling good-humouredly and naïvely, held out his hand to Ryabovsky and said:

"Very pleased. A certain Ryabovsky finished his course of study with me. Was he a relation of yours?"

CHAPTER II

TWO CUT FINGERS

Olga Ivanovna was twenty-two years of age, Dymov thirty-one. They began housekeeping splendidly. Olga Ivanovna covered all the walls of the drawing-room with her own and other people's sketches, in frames and without frames, near the piano and the furniture she made all sorts of cosy arrangements with Chinese umbrellas, easels, variegated coloured rags, daggers, little busts, photographs and so on. . . . She glued on the walls of the dining-room all sorts of

popular coloured woodcuts, she hung up birch bark shoes and sickles, placed a scythe and a rake in one corner and obtained in that way a dining-room in the Russian style. In order to make the bedroom look like a cavern she draped the ceiling and the walls with dark-coloured cloth, she hung up a Venetian lantern over the bed, and placed a figure with a halberd at the door. Everybody found that the young couple had a very charming nook.

Every day rising about eleven Olga Ivanovna would play on the piano, or if there was sun she would paint something in oils. Then at about twelve she would go to her dressmaker. As she and Dymov had but little money, only just enough, she and her dressmaker were obliged to have recourse to cunning, in order that she might often appear in new dresses and surprise people by her elegance. Very often out of old dyed dresses, out of bits of tulle that cost next to nothing or with the addition of lace, plush or silk a wonderful garment was produced, something quite enchanting—not a dress, but a dream. From her dressmaker's Olga Ivanovna usually drove to visit some actress of her acquaintance; to hear the news of the theatre, and at the same time to solicit a ticket for the first performance of a new play, or for some benefit night. From the actress's it was necessary to go to the studio of some artist or to ome picture show, then to one or other of the celebrities she knew to invite them to her house, to pay them a visit or simply to gossip. Everywhere she was greeted gaily and cordially, and she was assured that she was pretty, charming and quite uncommon. . . . The people she called celebrities and great received her as one of themselves, as their equal, and everybody with one voice prophesied that with her talents, taste and cleverness, if she did not fritter them away, great things might be expected. She sang, she played on the piano, she painted in oils, she modelled, she took part in amateur theatricals, and all this she did not in an ordinary way, but with talent; if she made little paper lanterns for illuminations, dressed herself out, or tied somebody's tie—she did it all in an uncommonly artistic manner, gracefully and charmingly. But in nothing were her talents more clearly evident than in her skill in rapidly making acquaintance and soon becoming intimate with famous people. It was only necessary for somebody to become a little famous, and cause himself to be talked about, for her to get acquainted with him, and the same day she would be on quite friendly terms and invite him to her house. To make a new acquaintance was for her a real holiday. She idolized celebrated men, she was proud of them, and dreamed of them every night. She thirsted for them and she was never able to quench her thirst. The old ones left and were forgotten, others came in their place, but she soon became accustomed to these, or became disenchanted with them, and then she began eagerly to seek out new men, new great men; she found them, and again searched for others. Why?

At five she dined at home with her husband. His simplicity, his good sense and good-nature caused her emotion and delight. She would constantly jump up, embrace his head impetuously and cover it with kisses.

"Dymov, you are a clever, a noble man," she would say; "but you have one very serious deficiency. You take not

the slightest interest in art. You have no taste for music and painting."

"I don't understand them," he said meekly. "All my life I've been occupied with natural science and with medicine, and I had no time to interest myself in art."

"But, Dymov, that is terrible!"

"Why? Your friends don't know anything about natural science or medicine, and you don't blame them for it. Every man has his own sphere. I don't understand landscapes and operas, but I think if certain clever people devote their whole lives to them and other clever people pay great sums of money for them, it means that they are necessary. I don't understand them, but not to understand does not mean to reject them."

"Let me press your honest hand!"

After dinner she went to her friends, then to the theatre or to a concert and only returned home after midnight. And so it was every day.

On Wednesdays she gave small evening parties. At these parties the mistress of the house and her guests did not play at cards nor did they dance, but they amused themselves in various artistic ways. The actor from the dramatic theatre recited, the singer sang, the artists drew in the albums, of which Olga Ivanovna had a great number, the violoncellist played and their hostess herself also drew, modelled, sang and accompanied. In the intervals between the recitations, music and singing, they talked and argued about literature, the theatre and painting. There were never any ladies, because Olga Ivanovna considered that all ladies, with the exception of actresses and her dressmaker, were dull and commonplace. There was never a single party that passed without the mistress of the house having little thrills whenever the bell rang, nor without her saying with a triumphant expression of countenance, "There he is!" meaning by the word "he" some new celebrity she had invited to her house. Dymov never appeared in the drawing-room, and nobody remembered his existence. But exactly at half-past eleven the door that led into the dining-room opened and Dymov appeared in the doorway with his meek good-natured smile, and rubbing his hands he would say:

"Gentlemen, come to supper, please."

Everybody went into the dining-room and they saw on the table exactly the same things: a dish of oysters, a piece of ham or veal, sardines, cheese, caviar, pickled mushrooms, vodka and two decanters of wine.

"My dear *maître d'hôtel!*" Olga Ivanovna exclaimed, clasping her hands with delight. "You are positively enchanting! Gentlemen, look at his forehead! Dymov, turn so that we can see your profile. Gentlemen, just look: isn't it the face of a Bengal tiger, and the expression is kind and mild as a deer's. Oh, you darling!"

The guests ate, and looking at Dymov they thought: "Indeed, he is a very good fellow!" but they soon forgot him and continued to talk about the theatre, music and painting.

The young couple were happy, and their life flowed on smoothly, though the third week of their honeymoon was not quite a happy one—it might be called even sad. Dymov caught the erysipelas in the hospital. He was confined to his bed for six days, and was obliged to have his beautiful black locks shaved off. Olga Ivanovna sat by his bedside and cried

bitterly, but when he was on the mend she tied a white handkerchief round his shaven head and began to paint him as a Bedouin. And they both were gay. Four days after he had recovered and had resumed his work in the hospital he again had another mishap.

"I have no luck, mama!" he said to her one day at dinner. "To-day I had four dissections, and I cut two of my fingers. And it was only when I got home that I noticed it."

Olga Ivanovna was alarmed. He smiled and said it was a trifle and that he often cut his hands slightly while making dissections.

"I become absorbed in my work, mama, and get absent-minded."

Olga Ivanovna waited with anxiety, fearing that he might get infected by the corpses, and she prayed to God at night, but all passed off well. And again their life flowed on peacefully and happily without sorrow or alarm. The present was beautiful, and to improve it spring was approaching, already smiling from afar and giving promise of a thousand joys. There would be no end to happiness! In April, May and June a country house far away from town—walks, sketches, fishing, nightingales, and then from July to the late autumn an excursion of artists to the Volga, and in this excursion as an indispensable member of the society Olga Ivanovna would naturally take part. She had already had two linen costumes made for the journey, she had bought colours, paint-brushes, canvas and a new palette. Ryabovsky came almost every day to see what progress she had made in painting. When she showed him her painting he would thrust his hands deep into his pockets, press his lips firmly together, sniff and say:

"So . . . this cloud jumps at you. It is not lighted up as it would be in the evening. The foreground is somewhat muddled, and there is something not quite right, you understand. . . . Your log hut has been squashed by something and squeaks piteously. . . . You ought to make this corner darker. But in general it's not so bad . . . quite praiseworthy."

And the more unintelligible he was the better Olga Ivanovna was able to understand him.

CHAPTER III

NO, MY DARLING!

Two days after Whit-Sunday, having had his dinner, Dymov bought various *hors d'œuvres* and sweetmeats, and went to visit his wife in the country. He had not seen her for more than two weeks, and he was very dull without her. While sitting in the railway coach and afterwards when he was looking for his *dacha* in the large wood, he felt hungry and tired and thought how he would have supper quietly with his wife, and then tumble into bed. And he looked gaily at the parcel in which he had caviar, cheese and smoked salmon.

When at last he found his house the sun was already setting. The old maid-servant said that her mistress was not at home, but that she would soon come in. The *dacha,* which was uninviting in appearance, with low ceilings and walls that had writing-paper glued on them and uneven floors full of chinks, consisted of only three rooms. In one room there was a bed, in another there were canvases, paint-brushes, dirty paper and

men's overcoats and hats lying about on the chairs and window-sills, and in the third room Dymov found three unknown men. Two of them were dark-haired and bearded, while the third was clean shaven and fat, evidently an actor. A samovar was boiling on the table.

"What do you want?" the actor asked in a deep bass voice, looking round at Dymov unsociably. "Do you want to see Olga Ivanovna? Wait, she will be in soon."

Dymov sat down and waited. One of the dark men, looking at him sleepily and lazily, poured out some tea and asked:

"Perhaps you would like some tea too?"

Dymov wanted both to eat and to drink, but in order not to spoil his appetite he refused the tea. Soon footsteps and a familiar laugh were heard; a door was slammed and Olga Ivanovna entered the room, in a broad-brimmed hat, carrying a box in her hand; she was followed by merry, rosy-cheeked Ryabovsky carrying a large umbrella and a camp stool.

"Dymov!" Olga Ivanovna cried, and she blushed with delight. "Dymov!" she repeated, laying her head and both her hands on his breast. "It's you! Why haven't you been for so long? Why? Why?"

"When have I time, mama? I am always occupied, and when I was free it always happened that the trains did not suit."

"How happy I am to see you! I dreamed about you the whole of the night. I was afraid you were ill. Oh, if you only knew how charming you are and now you have come exactly at the right moment! You will be my saviour! You alone can save me! To-morrow there is to be a most original wedding here," she continued, laughing and tying her husband's cravat. "A young telegraphist from the station is getting married, a certain Chikeldéev. A good-looking young fellow; besides he's not stupid, and, you know, he has something in his face strong and bearlike. . . . He'd make a good model for a young Viking. We, *dachniki*, all take a great interest in him, and we gave him our word of honour to come to his wedding. He's not a rich man, solitary and shy, and, of course, it would be a sin not to stand by him at such a moment. Just imagine, they'll be married after the liturgy, and from church we all go on foot to the bride's house . . . can you understand, through the wood, birds singing, sun spots on the grass, and all of us forming variously coloured patches on a bright green ground—most original, in the style of the French expressionists. But, Dymov, in what am I to go to the wedding?" Olga Ivanovna said, and she looked as if she was going to cry. "I have nothing with me here, literally nothing! No dress, no flowers, no gloves. . . . You must save me. As you have come it's quite clear fate destines you as my saviour. My dear, take these keys, go home and take out of my wardrobe my pink frock. You remember it; it hangs quite in front. . . . Then in the lumber room, to the right, you'll find on the floor two band-boxes. When you open the upper one you'll find tulle, tulle, tulle, and all sorts of scraps and below them flowers. Take all the flowers out very carefully; try, darling, not to crush them. I shall choose what I want afterwards . . . and buy me a pair of gloves. . . ."

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'All right," Dymov said, "I'll go back to-morrow and send them down."

'To-morrow, how is that possible?" Olga Ivanovna exclaimed, and she looked at him with astonishment. "When will you have time to-morrow? The first train leaves here at nine o'clock and the wedding is at eleven. No, my darling, you must go to-day, positively to-day! If you can't come back to-morrow, send the things by a messenger. Well, or else . . . a passenger train is just due. Don't miss it, darling!"

"All right."

"Oh, how sorry I am to let you go!" Olga Ivanovna said, and tears rose to her eyes. "What a fool I was to promise the telegraphist!"

Dymov hurriedly swallowed a glass of tea, took a couple of cracknels and, smiling, meekly went back to the station. And the caviar, the cheese and the smoked salmon were eaten by the two dark men and the fat actor.

CHAPTER IV

PASSIONATELY

On a calm moonlit July night Olga Ivanovna was standing on the deck of a Volga steamboat looking at the water or at the beautiful banks. Ryabovsky, who stood beside her, was telling her that the black shadows on the water were not shadows, but a dream, and when gazing at those bewitching waters, with their fantastic glitter, when looking at that fathomless sky and those gloomy pensive banks, which spoke to them of the troubles of life and of the existence of something higher, something eternal and glorious, it would be well to forget oneself—to die—to become a memory. The past was mean and uninteresting, the future was insignificant, but this beautiful night, unique in a lifetime, would soon be over, it would be blended with eternity—why live at all?

And Olga Ivanovna listened now to Ryabovsky's voice, now to the stillness of the night, and she thought that she too was immortal and would never die. The turquoise-coloured water, such as she had never seen before, the sky, the river's banks, the black shadows and the unaccountable delight that filled her soul, told her that she too would become a great artist, and that somewhere in the distant future, beyond the moonlit night in boundless space, success, fame, the love of the people awaited her. When, without blinking, she looked long into the distance there appeared before her a crowd of people, lights, the solemn sounds of music, shouts of enthusiasm—she herself was in a white dress with flowers, flowers were shed on her from all sides. She also thought that a really great man, a genius, the chosen of God, was standing beside her, leaning over the bulwarks. . . . All that he had created so far was excellent, novel, uncommon, and what he would create in time, when with years his rare talents would increase in strength, and he would become astonishingly, immeasurably great, this could be read in his face, by the way he expressed himself and by his regard for nature. He had quite a special way of talking about shadows, evening tones and brilliant moonlight, in a language quite his own, so that you involuntarily felt the witchery of his power over nature. He himself was very handsome, original, and his life was independent, free, avoiding anything worldly, it was like the life of a bird.

"It is getting chilly," Olga Ivanovna said, shivering.

Ryabovsky wrapped her up in his cloak, and said sadly:

"I feel I am in your power. I am a slave. Why are you so bewitching tonight?"

The whole time he gazed at her without removing his eyes from her; his eyes were terrible, and she feared to look at him.

"I am madly in love with you . . ." he whispered, breathing upon her cheek. "Say but one word and I will cease to live. I will give up art . . ." he murmured, greatly excited. "Love me, love . . ."

"Don't say such things," Olga Ivanovna said, closing her eyes. "It is terrible. And Dymov?"

"What of Dymov? Why Dymov? What have I to do with Dymov? There's the Volga, the moon, beauty, my love, my rapture, but there's no such thing as Dymov. . . . Oh, I know nothing. . . . I don't want the past, give me but one moment . . . one instant!"

Olga Ivanovna's heart went pit-a-pat. She wanted to think of her husband, but all her past with her wedding, with Dymov and her evening parties, seemed to her small, insignificant, dim, unnecessary and far, far away. Really, what was Dymov? Why Dymov? What was Dymov to her? Does he really exist in nature, or is he merely a dream?

"For him, a common and ordinary man, the happiness he had already had was sufficient," she thought as she covered her face with her hands. "Let them judge me *there*, let them curse me, but I, to spite them all, will just go and perish . . . go and perish. . . . One must try everything in life. Good Lord, how painful, but how nice!" . . .

"Well, what? What?" the artist murmured, putting his arm rond her and greedily kissing the hands with which she was feebly trying to push him away. "You love me? Yes? Yes? Oh, what a night! What a glorious night!"

"Yes, what a night!" she whispered, looking into his eyes that were glistening with tears; then having rapidly looked round, she put her arms round him and kissed him passionately on the lips.

"We're arriving at Kineshma," somebody said on the other side of the deck.

Heavy footsteps could be heard. It was one of the waiters who was passing by.

"Listen," Olga Ivanovna said to him, laughing and crying with happiness, "bring us some wine."

The artist, pale with excitement, sat down on a bench and looked at Olga Ivanovna with adoring and grateful eyes, then he closed them and said with a languid smile:

"I am tired!"

And rested his head on the bulwarks.

CHAPTER V

RED WITH SHAME

THE second of September was a calm and warm but dull day. Early in the morning a light fog had hovered about the Volga, and after nine o'clock it had begun to drizzle. There was no hope of the sky's clearing. At breakfast Ryabovsky had said to Olga Ivanovna that painting was the most ungrateful, the most tiresome art, that he was no artist, that only fools thought he had talent, and suddenly, without any cause,

he seized a knife and scraped out his very best sketch.

After breakfast he sat gloomily at the window looking out at the Volga. The Volga was already without brilliancy, dim, dull and cold in appearance. Everything foretold the approach of sad, gloomy autumn. It seemed as if the sumptuous green carpets that were spread on the banks, the reflections of diamond rays, the transparent blue distance and the whole of the elegance of stately nature had been stripped off the Volga and packed away in a trunk till the next spring, and the ravens flew along the Volga mocking her: "Bare! bare!" Ryabovsky listened to their cawing and thought that he was done for, and had lost his talent, that everything in this world was conditional, relative and stupid, and that he ought never to have got entangled with this woman. . . . In a word, he was in a bad humour and in low spirits.

Olga Ivanovna sat behind the partition on her bed passing her beautiful flaxen hair between her fingers, and imagining herself in her own drawing-room, her bedroom or her husband's study; her imagination bore her to the theatre, to her dressmaker's and to her celebrated friends. What were they doing now? Did they remember her? The season had already begun and it was time to think about her little parties. And Dymov? Dear Dymov! How meekly and childishly—complainingly, he begged her in his letters to come home quickly! Every month he sent her seventy-five roubles, and when she wrote to him that she had run into debt to the artists to the amount of one hundred roubles he sent her that too. What a kind, generous man he was! The journey had tired Olga Ivanovna, she felt dull and she wanted to get away as soon as possible from these peasants, from the smell of the river's damp and to cast off from herself that feeling of physical impurity that she had been experiencing the whole time that she had been living in peasants' huts and wandering from village to village. If Ryabovsky had not given his word of honour to the artists to remain with them until the twentieth of September, it would be quite possible to go away that very day. And how nice that would be!

"Good God!" Ryabovsky sighed. "When will the sun come out again? I can't finish my sunlit landscape without the sun!"

"But you have also a sketch with a cloudy sky," Olga Ivanovna said, coming from behind the partition. "You remember in the right foreground there is a wood and to the left a herd of cows and geese. You could finish it now."

"Eh?" the artist said, frowning. "Finish! Do you really think I am so stupid, that I don't know what I am to do!"

"How changed you are with me!" Olga Ivanovna sighed.

"Well, so much the better!"

Olga Ivanovna's lips trembled as she sat down near the stove and began to cry.

"Yes, we only wanted tears. Stop crying! I have a thousand causes for tears, but I don't cry."

"A thousand causes!" Olga Ivanovna sighed. "The chief cause is you're tired of me. Yes!" she said and began to sob. "In truth you are ashamed of our love. You are always trying that the artists should not notice anything, though it

is impossible to conceal it, and it has been known to them all long ago."

"Olga, there's one thing I ask you," the artist said, in an imploring tone, and he pressed his hand to his heart, "only one thing: don't torment me! That is all I require of you!"

"But swear that you still love me!"

"This is torment!" the artist hissed through his clenched teeth, jumping up from his seat. "It will end by my throwing myself into the Volga or going mad! Leave me in peace!"

"Well then, kill me, kill me!" Olga Ivanovna cried. "Kill me!"

She again began to sob and went behind the partition. The rain continued to spatter on the thatched roof of the log-hut. Ryabovsky, seizing his head in both hands, began to pace up and down, from corner to corner, then with a determined face, looking as if he wanted to prove something to somebody, he pressed his cap on his head and taking his gun over his shoulder he left the house.

For long after he had gone Olga Ivanovna lay on the bed and cried. At first she thought it would be a good thing to take poison, that when he returned Ryabovsky might find her dead; then her thoughts carried her mentally into her own drawing-room, or into her husband's study, and she imagined herself sitting motionless at Dymov's side and enjoying physical peace and cleanliness, or else in the evening sitting in the theatre listening to Masini. And the longing for civilization, for the noise of towns and of celebrated people oppressed her heart. A peasant woman entered the hut and began leisurely to light the stove and prepare dinner. There was a smell of burning and the air became blue with smoke. The artists came in dirty top-boots, and with faces wet with rain; they examined their sketches, and to console themselves said that even in bad weather the Volga had certain charms. The cheap clock on the wall went: "tick-tick-tick." . . . The flies feeling cold crowded together in the front corner near the icons and buzzed; and the movements of cockroaches could be heard among the thick cardboards beneath the benches. . . .

Ryabovsky only returned home when the sun came out again. He threw his cap on the table, and looking pale and worn out, he sank on to a bench in his dirty boots, and closed his eyes.

"I am tired," and knitting his brows he made an effort to raise his eyelids.

In order to prove that she was not angry, Olga Ivanovna came up to him and silently kissed him, and then caressingly passed a comb through his light hair. She wanted to comb his hair.

"What is it?" he asked, shuddering, as if something cold had touched him, and he opened his eyes. "What is it? Leave me in peace, I beg of you."

He pushed her aside with his hand and went away from her, and it appeared to her that the expression on his face was one of aversion and vexation. At that moment the peasant woman brought him a plate of cabbage soup, carrying it in both hands, and Olga Ivanovna saw that both her thumbs were wetted by the soup, and the dirty peasant woman with her large stomach, the cabbage soup, which Ryabovsky began to eat quickly, the log-hut and the whole of this life, which she had liked so much at first, for its simplicity and artistic disorder, appeared horrible to her now.

She suddenly felt herself insulted, and she said coldly:

"We must separate for some time, or else from sheer dullness we may have a serious quarrel. All this is boring me. I'm going away to-day."

"On what? Ride-a-cock-horse on a walking-stick?"

"To-day is Thursday, and at half-past nine the steamboat will arrive here."

"Eh? Yes, yes. . . . Well, what's to be done, go . . ." Ryabovsky said gently as he wiped his mouth with a towel in lieu of a napkin. "You are dull here, you have nothing to do, and I would be a great egoist to try to keep you here. Go, and after the twentieth we shall meet again."

Olga Ivanovna packed up her things gaily, even her cheeks began to glow with pleasure.

"Was it really possible," she asked herself, "that soon she would be able to write in a drawing-room, to sleep in a bedroom and to dine off a tablecloth?" Her heart was relieved and she was no longer angry with the artists.

"The colours and the paint-brushes I leave you, Ryabovsky," she said. "If anything remains you will bring it. . . . Mind, don't be lazy without me, don't mope, but work. You're my own good boy!"

At ten o'clock Ryabovsky kissed her, to take leave, so as not to kiss her on the boat, she thought, in the presence of the other artists, and then conducted her to the landing-place. The steamer soon arrived and bore her away.

She reached her home on the third day. Without taking off her hat and waterproof and breathing heavily from excitement she passed through the drawing-room into the dining-room. Dymov, without a coat and with his waistcoat unbuttoned, was sitting at the table sharpening a knife against a fork; a partridge was on a dish before him. When Olga Ivanovna entered the flat she was quite certain that it was necessary to hide everything from him, and that she had sufficient skill and strength to do so; but now, when she saw his broad, good-natured, happy smile and his sparkling joyful eyes, she felt to hide anything from this man would be as mean and horrid, and also as impossible and beyond her strength as it would be to calumniate, to steal or to murder, and in a moment she decided to tell him all that had happened. Having allowed him to embrace and kiss her, she sank on her knees before him and covered her face with her hands.

"What? What is it, mama?" he asked tenderly. "You've been dull?"

She raised her face, red with shame, and looked up at him in a guilty and imploring manner, but fear and shame prevented her from telling him the truth.

"It was nothing," she said. I only . . ."

"Let's sit down," he said, lifting her up and seating her at the table. "There we are . . . Have some partridge? Poor little thing, you are hungry."

She drew in her native air greedily, and ate the partridge, while he looked at her with affection and laughed joyfully.

CHAPTER VI

PAIN IN THE TEMPLES

Towards the middle of winter it was evident that Dymov began to suspect that he was being deceived. As if his own conscience were not clean, he was no longer able to look his wife straight

in the eyes, nor did he smile joyfully when they met and, in order to remain less alone with her, he often brought home to dinner his colleague, Dr. Korostelev, a little closely cropped man with a wrinkled face who, when he talked to Olga Ivanovna, was so confused that he either buttoned and unbuttoned his jacket the whole time, or twirled the left side of his moustache with his right hand. During dinner the two doctors would talk of the possibility of heart troubles being produced by the displacement of the diaphragm, or that of late large numbers of neurotic complaints had come under their observation, or that on the previous day while making the dissection of a patient, who according to the diagnosis had died of "malignant anæmia," Dymov had discovered a cancer in the pancreas. And it seemed that they both carried on these medical discussions only in order to permit Olga Ivanovna to remain silent, that is, not to lie. After dinner Korostelev would sit down to the piano, and Dymov would say to him with a sigh:

"Ech, brother! Well, well! Play us something sad."

Raising his shoulders, and spreading his fingers wide, Korostelev took several accords and began to sing in a tenor voice: "Show me a single dwelling, where the Russian peasant does not groan," and Dymov, sighing again, rested his head on his fist and sank into meditation.

Of late Olga Ivanovna had been extremely imprudent. Every morning she awoke in the very worst of humours, and with the thought that she no longer loved Ryabovsky, and that all was finished, thank God! But while she drank her coffee she thought that Ryabovsky had taken her husband from her, and that now she remained without her husband and without Ryabovsky; then she remembered that her acquaintances had said that Ryabovsky was preparing for the exhibition something astonishing, a mixture of a landscape and a genre painting, in Polenov's style, and that everybody who had seen it in his studio was enthusiastic about it; but this, she thought, he had created under her influence, and in general, thanks to her influence, he had greatly changed for the better. Her influence was so beneficial and so essential that if she left him he might possibly perish. And she also remembered that the last time he had come to see her in a grey speckled frock-coat and a new tie and had asked her:

"Am I not handsome?"

He really was elegant; with his long curls and blue eyes he looked very handsome, and (or perhaps she had only imagined it) he was very affectionate with her too.

Remembernig many things and pondering over them, Olga Ivanovna dressed, and drove to Ryabovsky's studio in great agitation. She found him gay and in raptures with his really magnificent picture; he jumped about, played the fool and answered serious questions with jokes. Olga Ivanovna was jealous of Ryabovsky's picture and hated it, but out of politness she stood before it for about five minutes in silence, sighing, as one sighs before a holy shrine, and at last she said in a low voice:

"Yes, you have never painted anything like it. Do you know, it is terrible!"

Then she began to implore him to love her, not to desert her, to have pity on

her, poor unhappy thing. She wept, she kissed his hands, demanded that he should swear he loved her, proved to him that without her good influence he would stray from the right path and perish. And, having spoiled his good-humour and feeling that she had humiliated herself, she drove off to her dressmaker, or to an actress she knew, to try to obtain tickets.

If she did not find him in his studio she would leave a letter in which she swore that unless he came to her that very day she would certainly take poison. He was afraid, went to her and remained to dinner. Unrestrained by the presence of her husband, he was insolent to her, she returned insolence with insolence. Both felt they were a drag on each other, that they were despots and enemies and were angry, and owing to their anger they never noticed that they were both behaving in an unseemly manner, and that even closely cropped Korostelev understood everything. After dinner Ryabovsky hastily took leave and went away.

"Where are you going?" Olga Ivanovna asked him in the ante-room, and she looked at him with hatred.

Frowning and screwing up his eyes he named one of the ladies of their acquaintance, and it was evident he was laughing at her jealousy and did it on purpose to vex her. She went into her bedroom and lay down on the bed; from jealousy, vexation, a feeling of humiliation and shame she bit the pillow and began to sob aloud. Dymov left Korostelev in the drawing-room, went into the bedroom and quite confused and perplexed he said to her softly:

"Don't cry aloud, mama. . . . Why? One must be silent about it. . . . One must not let people notice it. . . . You know, what's done can't be undone."

Not knowing how she could quell the terrible jealousy she felt within her, which already caused her to have pain in the temples, and thinking she might still improve matters, she washed, powdered her tear-stained face and flew off to the lady of her acquaintance. Not finding Ryabovsky with her, she drove to another and then to a third. . . . At first she was ashamed of driving about in that way; but after a time she became used to it, and it sometimes happened that in one evening she went to all the women she knew, to look for Ryabovsky, and they all understood why she had come.

One day she said to Ryabovsky about her husband:

"That man crushes me with his magnanimity."

This phrase pleased her so much that whenever she met the artists who knew of her romance with Ryabovsky she said each time, referring to her husband, and making an energetic gesture with her hand:

"That man crushes me with his magnanimity!"

The order of their life was the same as in the previous year. On Wednesdays there were small evening parties. The actor recited, the artists drew, the violoncellist played, the singer sang, and invariably at half-past eleven the door that led into the dining-room was opened, and Dymov with a smile on his face said:

"Gentlemen, come to supper, please."

As formerly, Olga Ivanovna looked out for great men, found them, was dissatisfied with them and looked for others. As formerly, she returned home

late at night, but now Dymov was not asleep as he used to be the year before, but was sitting in his study working. He never went to bed till about three o'clock and he rose at eight.

One evening when she was preparing to go to the theatre, she was standing before the pier-glass when Dymov, clad in a dress-coat and a white tie, came into her bedroom; he smiled meekly, and as formerly he looked his wife joyfully straight in the eyes. His face beamed.

"I have just been defending my thesis," he said, sitting down and stroking his knees.

"Defending?" Olga Ivanovna asked.

"Ogo!" he laughed, and he stretched his neck in order to see his wife's face in the mirror, as she was still standing before it with her back towards him arranging her hair. "Ogo!" he repeated. "Do you know it is very probable I shall be offered the post of professor's substitute on general pathology. It looks very like it."

It was evident by his delight and his beaming face that if Olga Ivanovna had shared his happiness and triumph he would have forgiven her everything, the present and the future, and he would have forgotten everything, but she did not understand what the post of professor's substitute or general pathology meant; besides, she was afraid of being late for the theatre and said nothing.

He sat for two minutes, smiled culpably and then left the room.

CHAPTER VII

SEND!

It was a most agitating day.

Dymov had a very bad headache; in the morning he would not have any breakfast and he did not go to the hospital, but passed the whole day in his study lying on the Turkish divan. At one o'clock Olga Ivanovna went as usual to Ryabovsky's, in order to show him her new sketch of still-life, and to ask him why he had not been to see her on the previous day. The sketch appeared to her insignificant, and she had only painted it in order to have an extra excuse for going to the artist's.

She entered the house without ringing, and while she was taking off her galoshes in the ante-room it seemed to her as if somebody had run quietly across the studio with a womanlike rustle of skirts, and when she hastened to look into the studio she saw for a moment a bit of a brown petticoat disappearing behind a large picture that, as well as the easel on which it stood, was covered with a long black linen that reached to the floor. She could not doubt that it was a woman. How often had Olga Ivanovna herself found a hiding-place behind that picture! Ryabovsky, evidently very much confused and seeming to be surprised at her arrival, held out both his hands to her and said with a forced smile:

"Ah, ah, ah, ah! So pleased to see you. What good news do you bring me?"

Olga Ivanovna's eyes filled with tears. She felt shame and bitterness, and not for a million could she have spoken in the presence of that strange woman, that rival, that liar, who was now standing behind the picture, and was probably giggling malevolently.

"I have brought you a sketch . . ." she said timidly, in a faltering voice and her lips trembled—"a nature morte."

"Ah, ah, ah! a sketch?"

The artist took the sketch into his hand and while examining it he went as if mechanically into the next room.

Olga Ivanovna followed him submissively.

"Nature morte . . . first class," he muttered, as if he was searching for rhymes "sport . . . port kurort. . . ."

Hasty steps and the rustle of a dress were heard in the studio. That meant *she* had gone away. Olga Ivanovna wanted to scream, to hit the artist with something heavy across the head and then go away, but she could see nothing through her tears; she was crushed by her shame and she felt not like Olga Ivanovna, the artist, but like a small insect.

"I am tired . . ." the artist said languidly, looking at the sketch, and he shook his head in order to conquer his drowsiness. "This is pretty, of course, but to-day it is a sketch, and last year it was a sketch, and in a month's time it will be a sketch. . . . Doesn't it bore you? In your place I would chuck painting and give up my whole time to music or something else. Why, you are no painter but a musician. If you only knew how tired I am! I'll go and order tea. . . . Eh?"

He left the room, and Olga Ivanovna heard him give some order to his manservant. So as not to take leave, not to have an explanation, but chiefly not to begin sobbing, she hastened into the ante-room, put on her galoshes before Ryabovsky returned and ran into the street. Here she sighed lightly and felt she was for ever free, not only from Ryabovsky, but from painting, and from the great shame that had weighed on her so heavily in the studio. All was finished!

She drove to her dressmaker's and then called on Barnay (the famous German tragedian), who had only arrived the day before, then to a music shop, and the whole time she was thinking how she was to write to Ryabovsky a cold, severe letter full of dignity, and then how in the spring or the summer she would go with Dymov to the Crimea, where she would free herself entirely from all the past and would begin quite a new life.

When she returned home late at night she did not redress, but sat down in the drawing-room to write her letter. Ryabovsky had told her she was not an artist, and she, to revenge herself on him, would write that every year he painted the same thing over and over again, and every day he said the same thing, that he was stagnating and that he would do nothing better than what he had already produced. She wanted to write that he owed much to her good influence, and if he acted badly it was only because her influence was paralyzed by various equivocal individuals, like the one who that day had hidden behind the picture.

"Mama!" Dymov called to her from his study without opening the door. "Mama!"

"What do you want?"

"Mama, don't come in here, but only come to the door. This is what has happened. . . . Three days ago I was infected with diphtheria in the hospital . . . and now I am feeling queer. Send quickly for Korostelev."

Olga Ivanovna called her husband like all her other male friends by their family names; his name Osip did not please her, because it reminded her of Gogol's Osip. Now she called out:

"Osip, this cannot be!"

"Send. I'm feeling bad," Dymov said behind the closed door, and she heard him go to the divan and lie down. "Send," his voice came to her hoarsely.

"What can this be?" Olga Ivanovna thought, and she grew cold with terror. "Why, it is dangerous!"

Without any necessity for doing it, she took up a candle and went into her bedroom, and there while thinking what she ought to do, she unintentionally looked at herself in the pier-glass. In her pale, frightened face, in the jacket with long sleeves and yellow frills at the throat and the striped skirt made in an unusual fashion, she appeared to be frightful—to be bad. Suddenly she became painfully sorry for Dymov, his unbounded love for her, his young life and even his widowed bed, on which for long he had not slept, and she remembered his usual meek, submissive smile. She began to cry bitterly, and wrote an imploring letter to Korostelev. It was two o'clock in the night.

CHAPTER VIII

NEVER TO AWAKEN

At past seven o'clock next morning, when Olga Ivanovna came out of her bedroom with a head heavy from want of sleep, unkempt and unbeautiful, and with a guilty expression on her face, an unknown gentleman with a black beard (probably a doctor) passed her and went into the lobby. There was a smell of medicine about the house. Korostelev was standing near the door that led into the study, twirling the left side of his moustache with his right hand.

"Excuse me, I cannot let you go to him." he said gloomily to Olga Ivanovna. "You might catch the infection. And really, why should you? And all the same it would do no good, as he is delirious."

"Has he the real diphtheria?" Olga Ivanovna asked in a whisper.

"People who rush into danger ought really to be prosecuted," Korostelev continued without replying to Olga Ivanovna's question. "Do you know how he caught the infection? Last Tuesday he sucked the diphtheria membrane out of a boy's throat through a glass tube. What good could that do? It was stupid . . . sheer folly. . . ."

"Is there danger? Is there much danger?" Olga Ivanovna asked.

"Yes. They say it's a bad form. One ought really to send for Shrek."

First a little red-haired man with a long nose and a Jewish accent came, then a tall, stooping man with long dishevelled hair, who looked like an archdeacon, took his place; he was followed by a very stout young man in spectacles with a red face. They were doctors, who came to watch at their colleague's bedside. Korostelev, though he had finished his time of watching, remained in the house and wandered about the rooms like a ghost. The housemaid served tea to the doctor on duty, and she had often to run to the chemist's, so there was nobody to do out the rooms. The house was quiet and dreary.

Olga Ivanovna sat in her bedroom and thought that God was punishing her for being unfaithful to her husband. A silent, resigned creature, depersonalized by his own meekness, characterless and weak from a superfluity of goodness, was dully suffering there on his sofa, and did not complain. And had he complained, even if it had been in his delirium, she

doctors, who were attending on him, would know that it was not alone the diphtheria that was to blame. If they asked Korostelev . . . he knew everything, and it was not without cause that he looked on his friend's wife with those eyes that seemed to say she was the chief and the real miscreant, and that the diphtheria was only her accomplice. She no longer remembered the moonlit night on the Volga, nor the declaration of love, nor the poetical life in the *isba;* she only remembered that from idle caprice, from mere indulgence she had soiled herself entirely—body, legs and arms—in something dirty, something sticky, which she could never again wash off.

"Oh, how terribly I lied!" she thought when she remembered the troubled love she had had with Ryabovsky. "May it all be accursed! . . ."

At four o'clock she dined with Korostelev. He ate nothing, he only drank claret and scowled. She also ate nothing. At times she prayed mentally and vowed to God that if Dymov only recovered she would love him again and be his faithful wife. At others, forgetting herself for a moment, she would look at Korostelev and think: "How tiresome it must be to be an ordinary, in no way remarkable, and quite an unknown man, with such a wrinkled face and such bad manners too!" Then again she thought, that at that very moment God would kill her because she, fearing the infection, had not once been in her husband's study. And in general she had a dull dejected feeling and a conviction that her life was spoilt and there was no way of mending it.

After dinner darkness came on. When Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room she found Korostelev asleep on the couch with a gold embroidered silk cushion under his head "Kri-pua," he snored, "Kri-pua."

The doctors, who came to watch at his bedside and went away again, did not notice this disorder. They did not notice that a strange man was asleep in the drawing-room and snoring, nor that there were sketches on the walls, nor that the room was furnished fantastically, nor that the mistress of the house was unkempt and slovenly—all this did not arouse the slightest interest now. One of the doctors suddenly laughed at something, and this laugh sounded strange and timid and it produced a weird effect.

Shortly after, when Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room again, Korostelev was no longer asleep. He was sitting up smoking.

"He has the diphtheria of the nasal cavity," he said in a whisper. "The heart is also not working well. It's really a bad job."

"Have you sent for Shrek?" Olga Ivanovna asked.

"He has been already. He noticed that the diphtheria had attacked the nose. Eh, after all, who is Shrek! There's nothing really special about Shrek. He's Shrek and I'm Korostelev—that's all."

Time went on terribly slowly. Olga Ivanovna lay on her bed, which had not been made since the morning, and dozed. It appeared to her that from floor to ceiling the whole house was filled with a huge piece of iron, and that it was only necessary to carry the iron out for everybody to become gay and relieved again. Awaking she remembered that this iron was Dymov's illness.

"Nature morte—port," she thought

sinking into drowsiness again, ". . . sport . . . Kurort. . . . And how is Shrek . . . trek . . . wreck. . . ? Where are my friends now? Do they know that we are in trouble? Lord save us . . . remove it . . . Shrek—trek. . . ."

And again there was the iron weight. . . . Time dragged on slowly and the clocks in the lower story struck very often. There was constant ringing of the door bell . . . doctors kept coming. . . . The housemaid came into the room with an empty glass on a tray and asked:

"Madam, do you wish me to make the bed?"

Receiving no answer she went out again. The clock below struck the hour. She dreamed of rain on the Volga, and then again somebody came into the bedroom. It appeared to be a stranger. Olga Ivanovna jumped up and recognized Korostelev.

"What o'clock is it?" she asked.

"About three."

"Well, how is he?"

"How, indeed! I have come to say he is passing away . . ."

He sobbed and sat down on the bed next to her, brushing away his tears with his sleeve. At first she did not understand, but she felt cold all over and began to cross herself slowly.

"Passing away . . ." he repeated in a shrill voice, and he sobbed again. "Dying, because he has sacrificed himself. . . . What a loss for science!" he said bitterly. "He was a great, an extraordinary man. . . . None of us can be compared with him. What gifts! What hopes we all had of him!" Korostelev continued, wringing his hands. "My God, my God, what a man of science the world has lost; we shall never see his like again. Osip Dymov, Osip Dymov, what have you done? Oh! oh! My God! My God!"

Korostelev buried his face in his hands and rocked to and fro.

"And what moral force!" he continued, becoming more and more incensed with someone. "A kind, honest, loving soul, not a man, but glass! He served science and he died for science. He worked like an ox—day and night—nobody spared him; a young scientist, a future professor, he had to look out for private practice—to work all night at translations in order to pay for these . . . wretched rags!"

Korostelev looked with hatred at Olga Ivanovna, and he seized the sheet with both hands and shook it angrily as if it were in fault.

"He did not spare himself and he was not spared by others. But what is the use of talking now!"

"Yes, he was a rare man!" somebody with a deep bass voice said in the drawing-room.

Olga Ivanovna remembered all her past life with him, from the beginning to the end, with all its details, and she suddenly understood that he really was a rare, an uncommon man who, compared with all those she knew, was really a great man. And remembering how her late father and all his colleagues had treated him, she understood that they all looked upon him as a future celebrity. The walls, the ceiling, the lamp and the carpet on the floor winked at her mockingly, as if they wanted to say: "Lost your chance, lost your chance!" With a cry she fled from the bedroom, rushed through the drawing-

room, passing some strange man, and ran into her husband's study. He was lying, motionless on the Turkish divan, covered up to the waist with a quilt. His face was sunken and terribly emaciated, and it had the greyish yellow colour that is never seen in the living. It was only by his forehead, by his dark eyebrows, and by his well-known smile that it was possible to recognize Dymov. Olga Ivanovna hastily felt his breast, his forehead and his hands. His breast was still warm, but his forehead and his hands were unpleasantly cold, and the half-open eyes did not look at Olga Ivanovna, but at the quilt.

"Dymov," she called to him in a loud voice. "Dymov!"

She wanted to explain to him that all had been a mistake, that not everything was lost, that life could yet be beautiful and happy, that he was an exceptional, an extraordinary, a great man, and that for her whole life she would revere him, pray to him and feel a sacred veneration for him.

"Dymov," she called aloud, shaking him by the shoulder, not being able to believe that he would never awaken again. "Dymov, Dymov, listen!"

At the same time Korostelev was saying to the housemaid:

"What is the use of asking? Go to the Church beadle and ask him where the old women live; they will wash and lay out the body—they will do all that is necessary."

Verotchka

Ivan Alexeievitch Ogneff well recollects an August evening when he opened noisily the hall door and went out on the terrace with a light cloak and a wide-brimmed straw hat—the very hat which now, beside his top-boots, lies in the dust underneath his bed. He then carried in one hand heavy books and manuscripts, and in his other a heavy cane.

In the doorway, stood his host, Kuznetsoff, aged and bald, with his long grey beard, and his white cotton jacket, lantern held aloft. And Kuznetsoff smiled kindly and nodded his head.

"Good-bye, old fellow!" cried Ogneff.

Kuznetsoff laid the lamp on the hall table, and followed Ogneff to the terrace. Their faint shadows swept down the steps, across the flower-beds, and came to a stop against the lime-trees.

"Good-bye, and again thank you, old fellow," said Ogneff. "Thanks for your heartiness, your kindness, your love. . . . Never . . . never in my whole life shall I forget your goodness. . . . You have been so kind . . . and your daughter has been so kind . . . all of you have been so kind, so gay, so hearty. . . . So good, indeed, that I cannot express my gratitude."

Under stress of feeling, under influence of the parting glass, Ogneff's voice sounded like a seminarist's, and his feeling showed not only in his words but in the nervous twitching of eyes and shoulders. And Kuznetsoff, touched also by emotion and wine, bent over the young man and kissed him.

"I have grown as used to you as if I were your dog," continued Ogneff. "I have been with you day after day. I have spent the night at your house a dozen times, and drunk so much of your liqueurs that it frightens me to think of it. . . But, most of all, Gavriil Petrovitch, I thank you for your co-operation and help. Without you, I should have been worrying over my statistics till October. But I will put in my preface: "It is my duty to express to M. Kuznetsoff, President of the N. District Zemstvo Executive, my gratitude for his kind assistance." Statistics have a brilliant future! Give my deepest regards to Vera Gavriilovna! And tell the doctors, the two magistrates, and your secretary that I shall never forget their kindness. . . . And now, old friend, let us embrace and kiss for the last time!"

Ogneff again kissed the old man. When he reached the last step, he turned his head and said—

"I wonder shall we ever meet again."

"God knows," answered Kuznetsoff. "Probably never."

"I fear so. Nothing will lure you to Petersburg, and it is not likely that I shall ever return to these parts. Good-bye!"

"But leave your books," called Kuznetsoff after him. "Why carry such a weight? My man will bring them to-morrow."

But Ogneff, who had not heard him, walked quickly away. Warmed with wine, his heart was full at the same time of sorrow and joy. He walked forward reflecting how often in life we meet such kindly men and women, how sad it is that they leave but memories behind. It is as on a journey. The traveller sees on the flat horizon the outline of a crane; the weak wind bears its plaintive cry; yet in a moment it is gone; and strain his eyes as he may towards the blue distance, he sees no bird, and hears no sound. So in the affairs of men, faces and voices tremble a moment before use, and slip away into the gone-before, leaving behind them nothing but the vain records of memory. Having been every day at hearty Kuznetsoff's house since he arrived that spring at N., Ogneff had come to know and love as kinsmen the old man, his daughter, their servants. He knew every spot in the old house, the cosy terrace, the turns in the garden paths, the trees outlined against garden and bathing-box. And now in a few seconds when he had passed the wicket-gate, all these would be memories, void for evermore of real significance. A year—two years—would pass, and all these kindly images, dulled beyond restoring, would recur only in memory as the shapeless impressions of a dream.

"In life," thought Ogneff, as he approached the gate, "there is nothing better than men. Nothing!"

It was warm and still. The whole world smelt of heliotropes, mignonette, and tobacco-plants which had not yet shed their blooms. Around shrubs and tree-trunks flowed a sea of thin, moonlight-soaked mist; and—what long remained in Ogneff's memory—wisps of vapour, white as ghosts, floated with motion imperceptibly slow across the garden path. Near the moon, shining high in heaven, swam transparent patches of cloud. The whole world, it seemed, was built of coal-black shadows and wandering wisps of white; and, to Ogneff, it seemed as if he were looking not at Na-

ture, but at a decorate scene, as if clumsy pyrotechnists, illuminating the garden with white Bengal fire, had flooded the air with a sea of snowy smoke.

As Ogneff approached the wicket-gate a black shadow moved from the low palisade and came to meet him.

"Vera Gavriilovna," he exclaimed joyfully. "You here! After I had looked for you everywhere to say good-bye! . . . Good-bye, I am going."

"So early—it is barely eleven o'clock."

"But late for me. I have a five-verst walk, and I must pack up tonight. I leave early tomorrow. . . ."

Before Ogneff stood Kuznetsoff's daughter, twenty-one-year-old Vera, whom he had seen so often, pensive and carelessly-dressed and interesting. Day-dreaming girls who spend the whole days lying down or in desultory reading, who suffer from tedium and melancholy, usually dress without care. But if Nature has given them taste and the instinct of beauty, this negligence in dress has often a charm of its own. And, indeed, Ogneff, recalling the vision of pretty Vera, cannot imagine her without a loose jacket, hanging in folds away from her waist, without untidy curls on her forehead, without the red, shaggy-tasselled shawl which all day long lay in the hall among the men's caps, or on the chest in the dining-room, where the old cat used it unceremoniously as bed. The shawl and the creased jacket seemed to express the easy-going indolence of a sedentary life. But perhaps it was because Ogneff liked Vera, that every button and fold exhaled to him goodness and poetry, something foreign to women insincere, void of the instinct of beauty, and cold. . . . And Vera, too, had a good figure, regular features, and pretty wavy hair. To Ogneff, who knew few women, she seemed beautiful.

"I am going away," he said again, bidding her good-bye at the wicket-gate. "Think well of me! And thanks for everything!"

And again twitching his shoulders, and speaking in the sing-song seminarist's voice which he had used to the old man, he thanked Vera for her hospitality, her kindness, her heartiness.

"I wrote about you to my mother in every letter," he said. "If all men were like you and your father, life on earth would be paradise. Every one in your house in the same. So simple, so hearty, so sincere. . . ."

"Where are you going?"

"First to my mother, in Oriol. I shall spend two days there. Then to St. Petersburg to work."

"And then?"

"Then? I shall work all winter, and in spring go somewhere in the country to collect material. Well . . . be happy, live a hundred years, and think well of me! This is the last time we meet."

Ogneff bowed his head and kissed Verotchka's hand; then in silent confusion straightened his cloak, rearranged his package of books, and said—

"What a thick mist to-night!"

"Yes. Have you not forgotten anything?"

"Nothing . . . I think."

For a moment Ogneff stood silently. Then he turned awkwardly to the gate and went out of the garden.

"Wait! Let me go with you as far as the wood," said Vera, running after him.

They followed the road. Trees no longer obscured the view, and they could

see the sky, and the country far ahead. Through breaks in the veil of semi-transparent smoke, the world exposed its fairness; the white mist lay unevenly around bushes and hayricks, or wandered in tiny cloudlets, clinging to the surface as if not to cut off the view. The road could be seen all the way to the wood, and in the ditches beside it rose little bushes which trapped and hindered the vagabond mist wisps. Half a verst away rose a dark belt of forest.

"Why has she come? I shall have to see her home," Ogneff asked himself. But looking at Vera's profile, he smiled kindly, and said—

"I hate going away in weather like this. This evening is quite romantic, what with the moonlight, the silence . . . and all the honours! Do you know what, Vera Gavriilovna? I am now twenty-nine years old, yet have never had a single romance! In all my life so far, not one! So of trysts, paths of sighs, and kisses, I know only by hearsay. It is abnormal. Sitting in my own room in town, I never notice the void. But here in the open air I somehow feel it . . . strongly . . . it is almost annoying."

"But what is the cause?"

"I can't say. Perhaps it is because so far I have never had time, perhaps simply because I have never yet met a woman who . . . But I have few friends, and seldom go anywhere."

They walked three hundred yards in silence. As Ogneff looked at Vera's shawl and uncovered head, he recalled the past spring and summer days, when far from his grey St. Petersburg rooms, caressed by kindly Nature and by kindly friends, pursuing his much-loved work, he had seen slip by, uncounted, sunset after dawn, day after day, nor noticed how, foreshadowing summer's end, the nightingale first, the quail, and then the corncrake ceased their songs. Time had passed unseen; and that, he supposed, meant that life had spun out pleasantly and without jar. He recalled how at the end of April he had arrived at N., a poor man, unused to society; and expected nothing but tedium, solitude, and contempt for statistics—which in his opinion took a high place among the useful sciences. He remembered the April evening of his arrival at the inn of Old-Believer Riabukhin, where for twenty kopecks a day he was given a bright, clean room, with only one restriction, that he should smoke out of doors. He remembered how he had rested a few hours, and, asking for the address of the President of the Zemstvo Executive, had set out on foot to Gavriil Petrovitch's house; how he had tramped through four versts of rich meadows and young plantations; how high under a veil of cloud trembled a lark, filling the world with silver sounds, while above the green pastures, with a stolid, pompous flapping of wings, the rooks flew up and down.

"Is it possible?" Ogneff asked himself, "that they breathe this air every day, or is it perfumed only this evening in honour of me?"

He remembered how, expecting a dry, business-like reception, he had entered Kuznetsoff's study timidly, with averted face, and shyly stroked his beard. And how the old man contracted his brows, and failed utterly to understand what this young man with his statistics wanted with the Zemstvo Executive. But as he began to understand what statistics really mean, and how they are collected, Gavriil Petrovitch woke up, smiled and

with infantile curiosity began to examine his visitor's note-books. . . . And on the evening of the same day, Ogneff sat at Kuznetsoff's supper-table, grew tipsy on strong liqueurs, and, watching the placid faces and lazy gestures of his new acquaintances, felt spreading through his whole body that sweet, drowsy indolence of one who, wanting to continue his sleep, stretches himself and smiles. And his new-found friends looked at him lovingly, asked were his father and mother alive, how much he earned a month, and whether he often went to the theatre.

Ogneff recalled the long drives through the cantons, the picnics, the fishing parties, the trip to the convent when the Mother Superior presented each visitor with a bead-purse; he recalled the endless, heated, truly Russian arguments in which the disputants, banging their fists on the table, misunderstood and interrupted without knowing what they meant to say, wandered from the subject, and after arguing fiercely a couple of hours, exclaimed with a laugh, "The devil knows what this dispute is about. We began about health, and are now arguing about rest in the grave!"

"Do you remember when you and I rode to Shestovo with the doctor?" asked Ogneff as they drew near to the wood. "We met a lunatic. I gave him five kopecks, and he crossed himself thrice, and threw the money in my face. What hosts of impressions I carry away—if fused in a compact mass, I should have a big ingot of gold! I never understood why clever, sensitive men crowd into big cities instead of living in the country. Is there more space and truth on the Nevsky, and in the big damp houses? My house, for instance, which is packed from top to bottom with artists, students, and journalists, always seems to me to embody an absurd prejudice."

Some twenty paces from the wood the road crossed a narrow bridge with posts at the corners. During their spring walks, this bridge was a stopping place for the Kuznetsoffs and their visitors. Thence they could draw echoes from the wood, and watch the road as it vanished in a black drive.

"We are at the bridge," said Ogneff. "You must return."

Vera stopped, and drew a deep breath.

"Let us sit down for a minute," she said, seating herself on a pillar. "When we say good-bye to friends we always sit down here."

Ogneff sat beside her on his parcel of books, and continued to speak. Vera breathed heavily, and looked straight into the distance, so that he could not see her face.

"Perhaps some day, in ten years' time, we'll meet somewhere again," he said. "Things will be different. You will be the honoured mother of a family, and I the author of a respectable, useless book of statistics, fat as forty thousand albums put together. . . . To-night, the present counts, it absorbs and agitates us. But ten years hence we shall remember neither the date nor the month, nor even the year, when we sat on this bridge together for the last time. You, of course, will be changed. You will change."

"I asked you just now. . . ."

"I did not hear."

Only now did Ogneff notice the change that had come over Vera. She was pale and breathless; her hands and lips trembled; and instead of the usual single

lock of hair falling on her forehead, there were two. She did her best to mask her agitation and avoid looking him in the face; and to help in this, she first straightened her collar as if it were cutting her neck, and then drew the red shawl from one side to the other.

"You are cold, I am afraid," began Ogneff. "You must not sit in the mist. Let me see you home."

Vera did not answer.

"What is the matter?" resumed Ogneff. "You do not answer my questions. You are ill?"

Vera pressed her hand firmly to her cheek, and suddenly drew it away.

It is too awful," she whispered, with a look of intense agony. "Too awful!"

"What is too awful?" asked Ogneff, shrugging his shoulders, and making no attempt to conceal his surprise. "What is the matter?"

Still breathing heavily and twitching her shoulders, Vera turned away from him, and after looking a moment at the sky, began—

"I have to speak to you, Ivan Alexeievitch. . . ."

"I am listening."

"I know it will seem strange to you . . . you will be astonished, but I do not care. . . ."

Ogneff again shrugged his shoulders and prepared to listen.

"It is this . . . ," began Vera, averting her eyes, and twirling the shawl-tassels in her fingers. "You see, this is . . . that is what I wanted to say. . . . It will seem absurd to you . . . and stupid . . . but I cannot bear it!"

Vera's words, half smothered in incoherent stammering, were suddenly interrupted by tears. She hid her face in the shawl, and wept bitterly. Ogneff, confused and stupefied, coughed, and, having no idea what to say or do, looked helplessly around. He was unused to tears, and Vera's breakdown seemed to make his own eyes water.

"Come, come!" he stammered helplessly. "Vera Gavriilovna! What does this mean? Are you ill? Some one has annoyed you? Tell me what it is . . . and perhaps I can help you."

And when, in a last attempt to console her, he drew her hands cautiously from her face, she smiled at him through her tears, and said—

"I . . . I love you!"

The words, simple and ordinary, were spoken in a simple and ordinary voice. But Ogneff, covered with intense confusion, turned his face away.

His confusion was followed by fright. The atmosphere of mournfulness, warmth, and sentiment, inspired by liqueurs and leave-takings, suddenly made way for a sharp, unpleasant feeling of awkwardness. Feeling that his whole soul had been turned inside out, he looked shyly at Vera; and she, having avowed her love, and cast for ever away her woman's enhancing inaccessibility, seemed smaller, simpler, meaner.

"What does it all mean?" he asked himself in terror. "And then . . . do I love her . . . or not?—that is the problem."

But she, now that the hardest, painfullest part was ended, breathed easily and freely. She rose from her seat, and, looking straight into Ogneff's eyes, spoke quickly, warmly, without constraint.

Those who have been overtaken by sudden terror seldom remember details, and Ogneff to-day recalls not one of Vera's words. He remembers only their import and the emotions they brought

forth. He remembers her voice, which seemed to come from a strangled throat, a voice hoarse with emotion, and the magic passion and harmony in its intonations. Crying, smiling, scattering tear-drops from her eyes, she confessed that since the first days of their friendship she had been won by his originality, his intellect, his kind, clever eyes, and by the aims and aspirations of his life. That she loved him devoutly, passionately, madly; that in summer when she went from the garden into the house and saw his coat in the hall, or heard his voice, her heart thrilled with a presage of intense joy; that his most trivial jokes had made her laugh; that every figure in his note-books exhaled to her wisdom and majesty; that even his cane standing in the hall had seemed to her lovelier than the trees.

The wood, the patches of mist, even the black roadside ditches were charmed, it seemed, as they listened. But Ogneff's heart felt only estrangement and pain. Avowing her love, Vera was entrancingly fair; her words were noble and impassioned. But Ogneff felt not the pleasure or vital joy which he himself yearned for, but only sympathy with Vera, and pain that a fellow-creature should suffer so for his sake. Heaven only knows why it was so! But whether the cause was book-learned reason, or merely that impregnable objectivity which forbids some men to live as men, the ecstasy and passion of Vera seemed to him affected and unreal. Yet even while he felt this, something whispered that, in the light of Nature and personal happiness, that which he listened to then was a thousand times more vital than all his books, his statistics, his eternal verities. And he was angry, and reproached himself, though he had no idea wherein he was at fault.

What increased his confusion was that he knew he must reply. An answer was inevitable. To say to Vera plainly "I do not love you!" he had not the strength. But he could not say "I do," for with all his searchings he could not find in his heart a single spark.

And he listened silently while she said that she could know no greater happiness than to see him, to follow him, to go with him wheresoever he might go, to be his wife and helper . . . and that if he abandoned her she would die of grief.

"I cannot stay here," she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "I have come to detest this house, and this wood, and this air. I am tired of this changeless restfulness and aimless life; I can stand no longer our colourless, pale people, as like one another as two drops of water! They are genial and kind . . . because they are contented, because they have never suffered and never struggled. But I can stand it no more. . . . I want to go to the big grey houses, where people suffer, embittered by labour and need. . . ."

And all this seemed to Ogneff affected and unreal. When Vera ceased to speak he was still without an answer. But silence was impossible, and he stammered out—

"I . . . Vera Gavriilovna . . . I am very grateful to you, although I feel that I deserve no such . . . such feelings. In the second place, as an honest man, I must say that . . . happiness is based on mutuality . . . that is, when both parties . . . when they love equally."

Ogneff suddenly felt ashamed of his

stammering speech, and was silent. He felt that his expression was guilty, stupid, and dull, and that his face was strained and drawn out. And Vera, it seemed, could read the truth in his look, for she paled, looked at him with terror, and averted her eyes.

"You will forgive me," stammered Ogneff, feeling the silence past bearing. "I respect you so very, very much that . . . that I am sorry . . ."

Vera suddenly turned away, and walked rapidly towards the house. Ogneff followed her.

"No, there is no need!" she said, waving her hand. "Do not come! I will go alone. . . ."

But still . . . I must see you home."

All that Ogneff had said, even his last words, seemed to him flat and hateful. The feeling increased with each step. He raged at himself and, clenching his fists, cursed his coldness and awkwardness with women. In a last vain effort to stir his own feelings he looked at Vera's pretty figure, at her hair, at the imprints of her little feet on the dusty road. He remembered her words and her tears. But all this filled him only with pain, and left his feelings dead.

"Yes. . . . A man cannot force himself to love!" he reasoned, and at the same time thought, "When shall I ever love except by force? I am nearly thirty. Better than Verotchka among women I have never met . . . and never shall meet. Oh, accursed old age. Old age at thirty!"

Vera walked before him, each moment quickening her steps. Her face was bowed to the ground, and she did not look round once. It seemed to Ogneff that she had suddenly grown slighter and that her shoulders were narrower.

"I can imagine her feelings," he said to himself. "Shame . . . and such pain as to make her wish for death! . . . And in her words there was life and poetry, and meaning enough to have melted a stone! But I . . . I am senseless and blind."

"Listen, Vera Gavriilovna." This cry burst from him against his will. "You must not think that I . . . that I . . ."

Agneff hesitated and said nothing more. At the wicket-gate Vera turned, looked at him for an instant, and, wrapping her shawl tightly around her shoulders, walked quickly up the path.

Ogneff remained alone. He turned back to the wood, and walked slowly, stopping now and then and looking towards the gate. His movements expressed doubt of himself. He searched the road for the imprints of Verotchka's feet. He refused to credit that one whom he liked so much had avowed to him her love, and that he had awkwardly, boorishly scorned her. For the first time in life he realised how little one's actions depend from mere goodwill; and he felt as feels every honourable, kindly man who, despite his intentions, has caused his nearest and dearest unmeant and unmerited suffering.

His conscience stung him. When Verotchka vanished in the garden he felt that he had lost something very dear which he would never find again. With Vera, it seemed to him, a part of his youth had passed away, and he knew that the precious moments he had let slip away without profit would never return.

When he reached the bridge he stopped in thought, and sought the cause of his

unnatural coldness. That it lay not outside himself, but within, he saw clearly. And he frankly confessed that this was not the rational calmness boasted by clever men, not the coldness of inflated egoism, but simply impotence of soul, dull insensibility to all that is beautiful, old age before its day—the fruit, perhaps, of his training, his grim struggle for bread, his friendless, bachelor life.

He walked slowly, as if against his own will, from the bridge to the wood. There where on a pall of impenetrable black the moonlight shone in jagged patches he remained alone with his thoughts; and he passionately longed to regain all that he had lost.

And Ogneff remembers that he returned to the house. Goading himself forward with memories of what had passed, straining his imagination to paint Vera's face, he walked quickly as far as the garden. From road and garden the mist had melted away, and a bright, newly washed moon looked down from an unflecked sky; the east alone frowned with clouds. Ogneff remembers his cautious steps, the black windows, the drowsy scent of heliotropes and mignonette. He remembers how old friend Karpo, wagging genially his tail, came up and snuffed at his hand. But no other living thing did he see. He remembers how he walked twice around the house, stood awhile before the black window of Vera's room; and abandoning his quest with a sigh returned to the road.

An hour later he was back in town; and, weary, broken, leaning his body and hot face against the gate, knocked at the inn. In the distance barked a sleepy dog; and the night watchman at the church beat an iron shield.

"Still gadding about at night!" grumbled the Old-Believer, as in a long woman's night-dress he opened the door. "What do you gain by it? It would be better for you if you stayed at home and prayed to God!"

When he entered his room Ogneff threw himself upon the bed, and long gazed steadily at the fire. At last he rose, shook his head, and began to pack his trunk.

The Match

CHAPTER I

COMMITTED

On the morning of October 6, 1885, in the office of the Inspector of Police of the second division of S—— District, there appeared a respectably dressed young man, who announced that his master, Marcus Ivanovitch Klausoff, a retired officer of the Horse Guards, separated from his wife, had been murdered. While making this announcement the young man was white and terribly agitated. His hands trembled and his eyes were full of terror.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked the inspector.

"Psyekoff, Lieutenant Klausoff's agent; agriculturist and mechanician!"

The inspector and his deputy, on visiting the scene of the occurence in company with Psyekoff, found the following: Near the wing in which Klausoff had lived was gathered a dense crowd. The news of the murder had sped swift as lightning through the neighborhood, and the peasantry, thanks to the fact that the day was a holiday, had hurried together from all the neighboring villages. There was much commotion and talk. Here and there, pale, tear-stained faces were seen. The door of Klausoff's bedroom was found locked. The key was inside.

"It is quite clear that the scoundrels got in by the window!" said Psyekoff as they examined the door.

They went to the garden, into which the bedroom window opened. The window looked dark and ominous. It was covered by a faded green curtain. One corner of the curtain was slightly turned up, which made it possible to look into the bedroom.

"Did any of you look into the window?" asked the inspector.

"Certainly not, your worship!" answered Ephraim, the gardener, a little gray-haired old man, who looked like a retired sergeant. "Who's going to look in, if all their bones are shaking?"

"Ah, Marcus Ivanovitch, Marcus Ivanovitch!" sighed the inspector, looking at the window, "I told you you would come to a bad end! I told the dear man, but he wouldn't listen! Dissipation doesn't bring any good!"

"Thanks to Ephraim," said Psyekoff; "but for him, we would never have guessed. He was the first to guess that something was wrong. He comes to me this morning, and says: 'Why is the master so long getting up? He hasn't left his bedroom for a whole week!' The moment he said that, it was just as if some one had hit me with an ax. The thought flashed through my mind, 'We haven't had a sight of him since last Saturday, and to-day is Sunday'! Seven whole days—not a doubt of it!"

"Ay, poor fellow!" again sighed the inspector. "He was a clever fellow, finely educated, and kind-hearted at that! And in society, nobody could touch him! But he was a waster, God rest his soul! I was prepared for anything since he refused to live with Olga Petrovna. Poor thing, a good wife, but a sharp tongue! Stephen!" the inspector called to one of his deputies, "go over to my house this minute, and send Andrew to the captain to lodge an information with him! Tell him that Marcus Ivanovitch has been murdered. And run over to the orderly; why should he sit there, kicking his heels? Let him come here! And go as fast as you can to the examining magistrate, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch. Tell him to come over here! Wait; I'll write him a note!"

The inspector posted sentinels around the wing, wrote a letter to the examining magistrate, and then went over to the director's for a glass of tea. Ten minutes later he was sitting on a stool, carefully nibbling a lump of sugar, and swallowing the scalding tea.

"There you are!" he was saying to Psyekoff; "there you are! A noble by birth! a rich man—a favorite of the gods, you may say, as Pushkin has it, and what did he come to? He drank and dissipated and—there you are—he's murdered."

After a couple of hours the examining magistrate drove up. Nicholas Yer-

molaïyevitch Chubikoff—for that was the magistrate's name—was a tall, fleshy old man of sixty, who had been wrestling with the duties of his office for a quarter of a century. Everybody in the district knew him as an honest man, wise, energetic, and in love with his work. He was accompanied to the scene of the murder by his inveterate companion, fellow worker, and secretary, Dukovski, a tall young fellow of twenty-six.

"Is it possible, gentlemen?" cried Chubikoff, entering Psyekoff's room, and quickly shaking hands with everyone. Is it possible? Marcus Ivanovitch? Murdered? No! It is impossible! Im-poss-i-ble!"

"Go in there!" sighed the inspector.

"Lord, have mercy on us! Only last Friday I saw him at the fair in Farabankoff. I had a drink of vodka with him, save the mark!"

"Go in there!" again sighed the inspector.

They sighed, uttered exclamations of horror, drank a glass of tea each, and went to the wing.

"Get back!" the orderly cried to the peasants.

Going to the wing, the examining magistrate began his work by examining the bedroom door. The door proved to be of pine, painted yellow, and was uninjured. Nothing was found which could serve as a clew. They had to break in the door.

"Everyone not here on business is requested to keep away!" said the magistrate, when, after much hammering and shaking, the door yielded to ax and chisel. "I request this, in the interest of the investigation. Orderly, don't let anyone in!"

Chubikoff, his assistant, and the inspector opened the door, and hesitatingly, one after the other, entered the room. Their eyes met the following sight: Beside the single window stood the big wooden bed with a huge feather mattress. On the crumpled feather bed lay a tumbled, crumpled quilt. The pillow, in a cotton pillow-case, also much crumped, was dragging on the floor. On the table beside the bed lay a silver watch and a silver twenty-kopeck piece. Beside them lay some sulphur matches. Beside the bed, the little table, and the single chair, there was no furniture in the room. Looking under the bed, the inspector saw a couple of dozen empty bottles, an old straw hat and a quart of vodka. Under the table lay one top boot, covered with dust. Casting a glance around the room, the magistrate frowned and grew red in the face.

"Scoundrels!" he muttered, clenching his fists.

"And where is Marcus Ivanovitch?" asked Dukovski in a low voice.

"Mind your own business!" Chubikoff answered roughly. "Be good enough to examine the floor! This is not the first case of the kind I have had to deal with! Eugraph Kuzmitch," he said, turning to the inspector, and lowering his voice, "in 1870 I had another case like this. But you must remember it—the murder of the merchant Portraitoff. It was just the same there. The scoundrels murdered him, and dragged the corpse out through the window——"

Chubikoff went up to the window, pulled the curtain to one side, and carefully pushed the window. The window opened.

"It opens, you see! It wasn't fas-
ned. Hm! There are tracks under
e window. Look! There is the track
a knee! Somebody got in there. We
ust examine the window thoroughly."

"There is nothing special to be found
the floor," said Dukovski. "No
ains or scratches. The only thing I
und was a struck safety match. Here
is! So far as I remember, Marcus
anovitch did not smoke. And he al-
ys used sulphur matches, never safe-
matches. Perhaps this safety match
ay serve as a clew!"

"Oh, do shut up!" cried the magis-
ate deprecatingly. "You go on about
ur match! I can't abide these dream-
s! Instead of chasing matches, you
d better examine the bed!"

After a thorough examination of the
d, Dukovski reported:

"There are no spots, either of blood
of anything else. There are like-
se no new torn places. On the pillow
ere are signs of teeth. The quilt is
ained with something which looks like
er and smells like beer. The gen-
al aspect of the bed gives grounds for
inking that a struggle took place on
"

"I know there was a struggle, with-
t your telling me! You are not
ing asked about a struggle. Instead
looking for struggles, you had bet-
——"

"Here is one top boot, but there is
sign of the other."

"Well, and what of that?"

"It proves that they strangled him,
ile he was taking his boots off. He
dn't time to take the second boot off
en——"

"There you go!—and how do you
ow they strangled him?"

"There are marks of teeth on the pil-
low. The pillow itself is badly
crumpled, and thrown a couple of yards
from the bed."

"Listen to his foolishness! Better
come into the garden. You would be
better employed examining the garden
than digging around here. I can do
that without you!"

When they reached the garden they
began by examining the grass. The
grass under the window was crushed and
trampled. A bushy burdock growing
under the window close to the wall was
also trampled. Dukovski succeeded in
finding on it some broken twigs and a
piece of cotton wool. On the upper
branches were found some fine hairs
of dark blue wool.

"What color was his last suit?" Du-
kovski asked Psyekoff.

"Yellow crash."

"Excellent! You see they wore blue!"

A few twigs of the burdock were cut
off, and carefully wrapped in paper by
the investigators. At this point Police
Captain Artsuybasheff Svistakovski and
Dr. Tyutyeff arrived. The captain bade
them "Good day!" and immediately be-
gan to satisfy his curiosity. The doc-
tor, a tall, very lean man, with dull
eyes, a long nose, and a pointed chin,
without greeting anyone or asking about
anything, sat down on a log, sighed, and
began:

"The Servians are at war again!
What in heaven's name can they want
now? Austria, it's all your doing!"

The examination of the window from
the outside did not supply any conclu-
sive data. The examination of the grass
and the bushes nearest to the window
yielded a series of useful clews. For
example, Dukovski succeeded in dis-

covering a long, dark streak, made up of spots, on the grass, which led some distance into the center of the garden. The streak ended under one of the lilac bushes in a dark brown stain. Under this same lilac bush was found a top boot, which turned out to be the fellow of the boot already found in the bedroom.

"That is a blood stain made some time ago," said Dukovski, examining the spot.

At the word "blood" the doctor rose, and going over lazily, looked at the spot.

"Yes, it is blood!" he muttered.

"That shows he wasn't strangled, if there was blood," said Chubikoff, looking sarcastically at Dukovski.

"They strangled him in the bedroom; and here, fearing he might come round again, they struck him a blow with some sharp-pointed instrument. The stain under the bush proves that he lay there a considerable time, while they were looking about for some way of carrying him out of the garden.

"Well, and how about the boot?"

"The boot confirms completely my idea that they murdered him while he was taking his boots off before going to bed. He had already taken off one boot, and the other, this one here, he had only had time to take half off. The half-off boot came off of itself, while the body was dragged over, and fell——"

"There's a lively imagination for you!" laughed Chubikoff. "He goes on and on like that! When will you learn enough to drop your deductions? Instead of arguing and deducing, it would be much better if you took some of the blood-stained grass for analysis!"

When they had finished their examination, and drawn a plan of the locality, the investigators went to the director's office to write their report and have breakfast. While they were breakfasting they went on talking:

"The watch, the money, and so on—all untouched—" Chubikoff began, leading off the talk, "show as clearly as that two and two are four that the murder was not committed for the purpose of robbery."

"The murder was committed by an educated man!" insisted Dukovski.

"What evidence have you of that?"

"The safety match proves that to me for the peasants hereabouts are not yet acquainted with safety matches. Only the landowners use them, and by no means all of them. And it is evident that there was not one murderer, but at least three. Two held him, while one killed him. Klausoff was strong, and the murderers must have known it!"

"What good would his strength be supposing he was asleep?"

"The murderers came on him while he was taking off his boots. If he was taking off his boots, that proves that he wasn't asleep!"

"Stop inventing your deductions. Better eat!"

"In my opinion, your worship," said the gardener Ephraim, setting the samovar on the table, "it was nobody but Nicholas who did this dirty trick!"

"Quite possible," said Psyekoff.

"And who is Nicholas?"

"The master's valet, your worship," answered Ephraim. "Who else could it be? He's a rascal, your worship. He's a drunkard and a blackguard, the like of which Heaven should not permit. He always took the master his vodka and put the master to bed. Who else

uld it be? And I also venture to oint out to your worship, he once oasted at the public house that he ould kill the master! It happened on count of Aquilina, the woman, you now. He was making up to a soldier's idow. She pleased the master; the aster made friends with her himself, d Nicholas—naturally, he was mad! e is rolling about drunk in the kitchen w. He is crying, and telling lies, say- g he is sorry for the master——"

The examining magistrate ordered icholas to be brought. Nicholas, a nky young fellow, with a long, freckled se, narrow-chested, and wearing an d jacket of his master's, entered Psye- ff's room, and bowed low before the agistrate. His face was sleepy and ar-stained. He was tipsy and could rdly keep his feet.

"Where is your master?" Chubikoff ked him.

"Murdered! your worship!"

As he said this, Nicholas blinked and gan to weep.

"We know he was murdered. But here is he now? Where is his body?"

"They say he was dragged out of the ndow and buried in the garden!"

"Hum! The results of the investi- tion are known in the kitchen already! That's bad! Where were you, my od fellow, the night the master was rdered? Saturday night, that is."

Nicholas raised his head, stretched s neck, and began to think.

"I don't know, your worship," he d. "I was drunk and don't remem- r."

"An alibi!" whispered Dukovski, iling, and rubbing his hands.

"So-o! And why is there blood under master's window?"

Nicholas jerked his head up and considered.

"Hurry up!" said the Captain of Police.

"Right away! That blood doesn't amount to anything, your worship! I was cutting a chicken's throat. I was doing it quite simply, in the usual way, when all of a sudden it broke away and started to run. That is where the blood came from."

Ephraim declared that Nicholas did kill a chicken every evening, and always in some new place, but that nobody ever heard of a half-killed chicken running about the garden, though of course it wasn't impossible.

"An alibi," sneered Dukovski; "and what an asinine alibi!"

"Did you know Aquilina?"

"Yes, your worship, I know her."

"And the master cut you out with her?"

"Not at all. *He* cut me out—Mr. Psyekoff there, Ivan Mikhailovitch; and the master cut Ivan Mikhailovitch out. That is how it was."

Psyekoff grew confused and began to scratch his left eye. Dukovski looked at him attentively, noted his confusion, and started. He noticed that the director had dark blue trousers, which he had not observed before. The trousers reminded him of the dark blue threads found on the burdock. Chubikoff in his turn glanced suspiciously at Psyekoff.

"Go!" he said to Nicholas. "And now permit me to put a question to you, Mr. Psyekoff. Of course you were here last Saturday evening?"

"Yes! I had supper with Marcus Ivanovitch about ten o'clock."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards—afterwards— Really, I do not remember," stammered Psyekoff. "I had a good deal to drink at supper. I don't remember when or where I went to sleep. Why are you all looking at me like that, as if I was the murderer?"

"Where were you when you woke up?"

"I was in the servants' kitchen, lying behind the stove! They can all confirm it. How I got behind the stove I don't know——"

"Do not get agitated. Did you know Aquilina?"

"There's nothing extraordinary about that——"

"She first liked you and then preferred Klausoff?"

"Yes. Ephraim, give us some more mushrooms! Do you want some more tea, Eugraph Kuzmitch?"

A heavy, oppressive silence began and lasted fully five minutes. Dukovski silently kept his piercing eyes fixed on Psyekoff's pale face. The silence was finally broken by the examining magistrate:

"We must go to the house and talk with Maria Ivanovna, the sister of the deceased. Perhaps she may be able to supply some clews."

Chubikoff and his assistant expressed their thanks for the breakfast, and went toward the house. They found Klausoff's sister, Maria Ivanovna, an old maid of forty-five, at prayer before the big case of family icons. When she saw the portfolios in her guests' hands, and their official caps, she grew pale.

"Let me begin by apoligizing for disturbing, so to speak, your devotions," began the gallant Chubikoff, bowing and scraping. "We have come to you with a request. Of course, you have heard already. There is a suspicion that your dear brother, in some way or other, has been murdered. The will of God, you know. No one can escape death, neither czar nor plowman. Could you not help us with some clew, some explanation——?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" said Maria Ivanovna, growing still paler, and covering her face with her hands. "I can tell you nothing. Nothing! I beg you! I know nothing—What can I do? Oh no! no!—not a word about my brother! If I die, I won't say anything!"

Maria Ivanovna began to weep, and left the room. The investigators looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and beat a retreat.

"Confound the woman!" scolded Dukovski, going out of the house. "It is clear she knows something, and is concealing it! And the chambermaid has a queer expression too! Wait, you wretches! We'll ferret it all out!"

In the evening Chubikoff and his deputy, lit on their road by the pale moon, wended their way homeward. They sat in their carriage and thought over the results of the day. Both were tired and kept silent. Chubikoff was always unwilling to talk while traveling, and the talkative Dukovski remained silent, to fall in with the elder man's humor. But at the end of their journey the deputy could hold in no longer, and said:

"It is quite certain," he said, "that Nicholas had something to do with the matter. *Non dubitandum est!* You can see by his face what sort of a case he is! His alibi betrays him, body and bones. But it is also certain that he did not set the thing going. He was only the stupid hired tool. You agree." And the humble Psyekoff was not with

ut some slight share in the matter. lis dark blue breeches, his agitation, is lying behind the stove in terror after ne murder, his alibi and—Aqui- na——"

"'Grind away, Emilian; it's your eek!' So, according to you, whoever new Aquilina is the murderer! Hot- ead! You ought to be sucking a bot- e, and not handling affairs! You were ne of Aquilina's admirers yourself— oes it follow that you are implicated o?"

"Aquilina was cook in your house for month. I am saying nothing about at! The night before that Saturday was playing cards with you, and saw ou, otherwise I should be after you o! It isn't the woman that matters, d chap! It is the mean, nasty, low irit of jealousy that matters. The tiring young man was not pleased nen they got the better of him, you e! His vanity, don't you see? He nted revenge. Then, those thick lips his suggest passion. So there you ve it: wounded self-love and passion. at is quite enough motive for a mur- r. We have two of them in our nds; but who is the third? Nicholas d Psyekoff held him, but who othered him? Psyekoff is shy, timid, all-round coward. And Nicholas uld not know how to smother with a low. His sort use an ax or a club. me third person did the smothering; who was it?"

Dukovski crammed his hat down over eyes and pondered. He remained nt until the carriage rolled up to the gistrate's door.

"Eureka!" he said, entering the little use and throwing off his overcoat. ureka, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! The only thing I can't understand is, how it did not occur to me sooner! Do you know who the third person was?"

"Oh, for goodness sake, shut up! There is supper! Sit down to your evening meal!"

The magistrate and Dukovski sat down to supper. Dukovski poured himself out a glass of vodka, rose, drew himself up, and said, with sparkling eyes:

"Well, learn that the third person, who acted in concert with that scoundrel Psyekoff, and did the smothering, was a woman! Yes-s! I mean—the murdered man's sister, Maria Ivanovna!"

Chubikoff choked over his vodka, and fixed his eyes on Dukovski.

"You aren't—what's-its-name? Your head isn't what-do-you-call-it? You haven't a pain in it?"

"I am perfectly well! Very well, let us say that I am crazy; but how do you explain her confusion when we appeared? How do you explain her unwillingness to give us any information? Let us admit that these are trifles. Very well! All right! But remember their relations. She detested her brother. She never forgave him for living apart from his wife. She is of the Old Faith, while in her eyes he is a godless profligate. There is where the germ of her hate was hatched. They say he succeeded in making her believe that he was an angel of Satan. He even went in for spiritualism in her presence!"

"Well, what of that?"

"You don't understand? She, as a member of the Old Faith, murdered him through fanaticism. It was not only that she was putting to death a weed, a profligate—she was freeing the

world of an antichrist!—and there in her opinion, was her service, her religious achievement! Oh, you don't know those old maids of the Old Faith. Read Dostoyevsky! And what does Lyeskoff say about them, or Petcherski? It was she, and nobody else, even if you cut me open. She smothered him! O treacherous woman! wasn't that the reason why she was kneeling before the icons, when we came in, just to take our attention away? 'Let me kneel down and pray,' she said to herself, 'and they will think I am tranquil and did not expect them!' That is the plan of all novices in crime, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, old pal! My dear old man, won't you intrust this business to me? Let me personally bring it through! Friend, I began it and I will finish it!"

Chubikoff shook his head and frowned.

"We know how to manage difficult matters ourselves," he said; "and your business is not to push yourself in where you don't belong. Write from dictation when you are dictated to; that is your job!"

Dukovski flared up, banged the door, and disappeared.

"Clever rascal!" muttered Chubikoff, glancing after him. "Awfully clever! But too much of a hothead. I must buy him a cigar case at the fair as a present."

The next day, early in the morning, a young man with a big head and a pursed-up mouth, who came from Klausoff's place, was introduced to the magistrate's office. He said he was the shepherd Daniel, and brought a very interesting piece of information.

"I was a bit drunk," he said. "I was with my pal till midnight. On my wa home, as I was drunk, I went into th river for a bath. I was taking a bath when I looked up. Two men were walk ing along the dam, carrying somethin black. 'Shoo!' I cried at them. The got scared, and went off like the win toward Makareff's cabbage garde Strike me dead, if they weren't carryin away the master!"

That same day, toward evening, Psye koff and Nicholas were arrested an brought under guard to the distric town. In the town they were com mitted to the cells of the prison.

CHAPTER II

CONFESSION

A FORTNIGHT passed.

It was morning. The magistrat Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch was sittin in his office before a green table, turn ing over the papers of the "Klauso case"; Dukovski was striding restless up and down, like a wolf in a cage.

"You are convinced of the guilt o Nicholas and Psyekoff," he said, ner vously plucking at his young beard "Why will you not believe in the guil of Maria Ivanovna? Are there no proofs enough for you?"

"I don't say I am not convinced. I am convinced, but somehow I don't be lieve it! There are no real proofs, bu just a kind of philosophizing—fanati cism, this and that——"

"You can't do without an ax an bloodstained sheets. Those jurists Very well, I'll prove it to you! Yo will stop sneering at the psychologica side of the affair! To Siberia with you Maria Ivanovna! I will prove it! I philosophy is not enough for you,

ıave something substantial for you. It will show you how correct my philos-phy is. Just give me permission——"

"What are you going on about?"

"About the safety match! Have you orgotten it? I haven't! I am going tc ınd out who struck it in the murdered ıan's room. It was not Nicholas that truck it; it was not Psyekoff, for either of them had any matches when hey were examined; it was the third erson, Maria Ivanovna. I will prove t to you. Just give me permission to o through the district to find out."

"That's enough! Sit down. Let us o on with the examination."

Dukovski sat down at a little table, nd plunged his long nose in a bundle f papers.

"Bring in Nicholas Tetekhoff!" cried he examining magistrate.

They brought Nicholas in. Nicholas vas pale and thin as a rail. He was rembling.

"Tetekhoff!" began Chubikoff. "In 879 you were tried in the Court of the irst Division, convicted of theft, and entenced to imprisonment. In 1882 ou were tried a second time for theft, nd were again imprisoned. We know ll——"

Astonishment was depicted on Nicholas's face. The examining magis-rate's omniscience startled him. But oon his expression of astonishment hanged to extreme indignation. He egan to cry and requested permission o go and wash his face and quiet down. hey led him away.

"Bring in Psyekoff!" ordered the ex-mining magistrate.

They brought in Psyekoff. The oung man had changed greatly during he last few days. He had grown thin and pale, and looked haggard. His eyes had an apathetic expression.

"Sit down, Psyekoff," said Chubikoff. "I hope that today you are going to be reasonable, and will not tell lies, as you did before. All these days you have denied that you had anything to do with the murder of Klausoff, in spite of all the proofs that testify against you. That is foolish. Confession will lighten your guilt. This is the last time I am going to talk to you. If you do not confess to-day, to-morrow it will be too late. Come, tell me all——"

"I know nothing about it. I know nothing about your proofs," answered Psyekoff, almost inaudibly.

"It's no use! Well, let me relate to you how the matter took place. On Saturday evening you were sitting in Klausoff's sleeping room, and drinking vodka and beer with him." (Dukovski fixed his eyes on Psyekoff's face, and kept them there all through the examination.) "Nicholas was waiting on you. At one o'clock, Marcus Ivanovitch announced his intention of going to bed. He always went to bed at one o'clock. When he was taking off his boots, and was giving you direction about details of management, you and Nicholas, at a given signal, seized your drunken master and threw him on the bed. One of you sat on his legs, the other on his head. Then a third person came in from the passage—a woman in a black dress, whom you know well, and who had previously arranged with you as to her share in your criminal deed. She seized a pillow and began to smother him. While the struggle was going on the candle went out. The woman took a box of safety matches from her pocket, and lit the candle.

Was it not so? I see by your face that I am speaking the truth. But to go on. After you had smothered him, and saw that he had ceased breathing, you and Nicholas pulled him out through the window and laid him down near the burdock. Fearing that he might come round again, you struck him with something sharp. Then you carried him away, and laid him down under a lilac bush for a short time. After resting awhile and considering, you carried him across the fence. Then you entered the road. After that comes the dam. Near the dam, a peasant frightened you. Well, what is the matter with you?"

"I am suffocating!" replied Psyekoff. "Very well—have it so. Only let me go out, please!"

They led Psyekoff away.

"At last! He has confessed!" cried Chubikoff, stretching himself luxuriously. "He has betrayed himself! And didn't I get round him cleverly! Regularly caught him napping——"

"And he doesn't deny the woman in the black dress!" exulted Dukovski. "But all the same, that safety match is tormenting me frightfully. I can't stand it any longer. Good-by! I am off!"

Dukovski put on his cap and drove off. Chubikoff began to examine Aquilina. Acquilina declared that she knew nothing whatever about it.

At six that evening Dukovski returned. He was more agitated than he had ever been before. His hands trembled so that he could not even unbutton his greatcoat. His cheeks glowed. It was clear that he did not come empty-handed.

"Veni, vidi, vici!" he cried, rushing into Chubikoff's room, and falling into an armchair. "I swear to you on my honor, I begin to believe that I am a genius! Listen, devil take us all! It is funny, and it is sad. We have caught three already—isn't that so? Well, I have found the fourth, and a woman at that. You will never believe who it is! But listen. I went to Klausoff's village, and began to make a spiral round it. I visited all the little shops, public houses, dram shops on the road, everywhere asking for safety matches. Everywhere they said they hadn't any. I made a wide round. Twenty times I lost faith, and twenty times I got it back again. I knocked about the whole day, and only an hour ago I got on the track. Three versts from here. They gave me a packet of ten boxes. One box was missing. Immediately: 'Who bought the other box?' 'Such-a-one!' She was pleased with them!' Old man! Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! See what a fellow who was expelled from the seminary and who has read Gaboriau can do! From to-day on I begin to respect myself! Oof! Well, come!"

"Come where?"

"To her, to number four! We must hurry, otherwise—otherwise I'll burst with impatience! Do you know who she is? You'll never guess! Olga Petrovna, Marcus Ivanovitch's wife—his own wife—that's who it is! She is the person who bought the matchbox!"

"You—you—you are out of your mind!"

"It's quite simple! To begin with, she smokes. Secondly, she was head and ears in love with Klausoff, even after he refused to live in the same house with her, because she was always scolding his head off. Why, they say she used to beat him because she loved him so much. And then he positively

efused to stay in the same house. Love urned sour. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.' But come along! Quick, or it will be dark. Come!"

"I am not yet sufficiently crazy to go nd disturb a respectable honorable voman in the middle of the night for a razy boy!"

"Respectable, honorable! Do honorble women murder their husbands? fter that you are a rag, and not an xamining magistrate! I never ventured o call you names before, but now you ompel me to. Rag! Dressing-gown!—Dear Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, do ome, I beg of you——!"

The magistrate made a deprecating notion with his hand.

"I beg of you! I ask, not for myself, ut in the interests of justice. I beg ou! I implore you! Do what I ask ou to, just this once!"

Dukovski went down on his knees.

"Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! Be kind! all me a blackguard, a ne'er-do-well, if am mistaken about this woman. You ee what an affair it is. What a case is. A romance! A woman murdering er own husband for love! The fame f it will go all over Russia. They will ake you investigator in all important ases. Understand, O foolish old man!"

The magistrate frowned, and undedly stretched his hand toward his ap.

"Oh, the devil take you!" he said. Let us go!"

It was dark when the magistrate's arriage rolled up to the porch of the d country house in which Olga etrovna had taken refuge with her other.

"What pigs we are," said Chubikoff, taking hold of the bell, "to disturb a poor woman like this!"

"It's all right! It's all right! Don't get frightened! We can say that we have broken a spring."

Chubikoff and Dukovski were met at the threshold by a tall buxom woman of three and twenty, with pitch-black brows and juicy red lips. It was Olga Petrovna herself, apparently not the least distressed by the recent tragedy.

"Oh, what a pleasant surprise!" she said, smiling broadly. "You are just in time for supper. Kuzma Petrovitch is not at home. He is visiting the priest, and has stayed late. But we'll get on without him! Be seated. You have come from the examination?"

"Yes. We broke a spring, you know," began Chubikoff, entering the sitting room and sinking into an armchair.

"Take her unawares—at once!" whispered Dukovski; "take her unawares!"

"A spring—hum—yes—so we came in."

"Take her unawares, I tell you! She will guess what the matter is if you drag things out like that."

"Well, do it yourself as you want. But let me get out of it," muttered Chubikoff, rising and going to the window.

"Yes, a spring," began Dukovski, going close to Olga Petrovna and wrinkling his long nose. "We did not drive over here—to take supper with you or—to see Kuzma Petrovitch. We came here to ask you, respected madam, where Marcus Ivanovitch is, whom you murdered!"

"What? Marcus Ivanovitch murdered?" stammered Olga Petrovna, and her broad face suddenly and instantaneously flushed bright scarlet. "I don't—understand!"

"I ask you in the name of the law! Where in Klausoff? We know all!"

"Who told you?" Olga Petrovna asked in a low voice, unable to endure Dukovski's glance.

"Be so good as to show us where he is!"

"But how did you find out? Who told you?"

"We know all! I demand it in the name of the law!"

The examining magistrate, emboldened by her confusion, came forward and said:

"Show us, and we will go away. Otherwise, we——"

What do you want with him?"

"Madam, what is the use of these questions? We ask you to show us! You tremble, you are agitated. Yes, he has been murdered, and, if you must have it, murdered by you. Your accomplices have betrayed you!"

Olga Petrovna grew pale.

Come!" she said in a low voice, wringing her hands. "I have him—hid—in the bath house! Only for heaven's sake, do not tell Kuzma Petrovitch. I beg and implore you! He will never forgive me!"

Olga Petrovna took down a big key from the wall, and led her guests through the kitchen and passage to the courtyard. The courtyard was in darkness. Fine rain was falling. Olga Petrovna walked in advance of them. Chubikoff and Dukovski strode behind her through the long grass, as the odor of wild hemp and dishwater splashing under their feet reached them. The courtyard was wide. Soon the dishwater ceased, and they felt freshly broken earth under their feet. In the darkness appeared the shadowy outlines of trees, and among the trees a little house with a crooked chimney.

"That is the bath house." said Olga Petrovna. "But I implore you, do not tell my brother! If you do, I'll never hear the end of it!"

Going up to the bath house, Chubikoff and Dukovski saw a huge padlock on the door.

"Get your candle and matches ready," whispered the examining magistrate to his deputy.

Olga Petrovna unfastened the padlock and let her guests into the bath house. Dukovski struck a match and lit up the anteroom. In the middle of the anteroom stood a table. On the table, beside a sturdy little samovar, stood a soup tureen with cold cabbage soup and a plate with the remnants of some sauce.

"Forward!"

They went into the next room, where the bath was. There was a table there also. On the table was a dish with some ham, a bottle of vodka, plates, knives forks.

"But where is it—where is the murdered man?" asked the examining magistrate.

"On the top tier," whispered Olga Petrovna, still pale and trembling.

Dukovski took the candle in his hand and climbed up to the top tier of the sweating frame. There he saw a long human body lying motionless on a large feather bed. A slight snore came from the body.

"You are making fun of us, devil take it!" cried Dukovski. "That is not the murdered man! Some live fool is lying here. Here, whoever you are, the devil take you!"

The body drew in a quick breath and stirred. Dukovski stuck his elbow into it. It raised a hand, stretched itself and lifted its head.

"Who is sneaking in here?" asked

noarse, heavy bass. "What do you want?"

Dukovski raised the candle to the face of the unknown, and cried out. In the red nose, disheveled, unkempt hair, the pitch-black mustaches, one of which was jauntily twisted and pointed insolently toward the ceiling, he recognized the gallant cavalryman Klausoff.

"You—Marcus—Ivanovitch? Is it possible?"

The examining magistrate glanced sharply up at him, and stood spellbound.

"Yes, it is I. That's you, Dukovski? What the devil do you want here? And who's that other mug down there? Great snakes; It is the examining magistrate! What fate has brought him here?"

Klausoff rushed down and threw his arms round Chubikoff in a cordial embrace. Olga Petrovna slipped through the door.

"How did you come here? Let's have a drink, devil take it! Tra-ta-ti-to-tum —let us drink! But who brought you here? How did you find out that I was here? But it doesn't matter! Let's have a drink!"

Klausoff lit the lamp and poured out three glasses of vodka.

"That is—I don't understand you," said the examining magistrate, running his hands over him. "Is this you or not you!"

"Oh, shut up! You want to preach me a sermon? Don't trouble yourself! Young Dukovski, empty your glass! Friends, let us bring this—What are you looking at? Drink!"

"All the same, I do not understand!" said the examining magistrate, mechanically drinking off the vodka. "What are you here for?"

"Why shouldn't I be here, if I am all right here?"

Klausoff drained his glass and took a bite of ham.

"I am in captivity here, as you see. In solitude, in a cavern, like a ghost or a bogey. Drink! She carried me off and locked me up, and—well, I am living here, in the deserted bath house, like a hermit. I am fed. Next week I think I'll try to get out. I'm tired of it here!"

"Incomprehensible!" said Dukovski.

"What is incomprehensible about it?"

"Incomprehensible! For Heaven's sake, how did your boot get into the garden?"

"What boot?"

"We found one boot in the sleeping room and the other in the garden."

"And what do you want to know that for? It's none of your business. Why don't you drink, devil take you? If you wakened me, then drink with me! It is an interesting tale, brother, that of the boot! I didn't want to go with Olga. I don't like to be bossed. She came under the window and began to abuse me. She always was a termagant. You know what women are like, all of them. I was a bit drunk, so I took a boot and heaved it at her. Ha-ha-ha! Teach her not to scold another time! But it didn't! Not a bit of it! She climbed in at the window, lit the lamp, and began to hammer poor tipsy me. She thrashed me, dragged me over here, and locked me in. She feeds me now—on love, vodka, and ham! But where are you off to, Chubikoff? Where are you going?"

The examining magistrate swore, and left the bath house. Dukovski followed him, crestfallen. They silently took their seats in the carriage and drove off. The road never seemed to them so long

and disagreeable as it did that time. Both remained silent. Chubikoff trembled with rage all the way. Dukovski hid his nose in the collar of his overcoat, as if he was afraid that the darkness and the drizzling rain might read the shame in his face.

When they reached home, the examining magistrate found Dr. Tyutyeff awaiting him. The doctor was sitting at the table, and, sighing deeply, was turning over the pages of the *Neva*.

"Such goings-on there are in the world!" he said, meeting the examining magistrate with a sad smile. "Austria is at it again! And Gladstone also to some extent——"

Chubikoff threw his cap under the table, and shook himself.

"Devils' skeletons! Don't plague me! A thousand times I have told you not to bother me with your politics! This is no question of politics! And you," said Chubikoff, turning to Dukovski and shaking his fist, "I won't forget this in a thousand years!"

"But the safety match? How could I know?"

"Choke yourself with your safety match! Get out of my way! Don't make me mad, or the devil only knows what I'll do to you! Don't let me see a trace of you!"

Dukovski sighed, took his hat, and went out.

"I'll go and get drunk," he decided, going through the door, and gloomily wending his way to the public house.

Excellent People

Once upon a time there lived in Moscow a man called Vladimir Semyonitch Liadovsky. He took his degree at the university in the faculty of law and had a post on the board of management of some railway; but if you had asked him what his work was, he would look candidly and openly at you with his large bright eyes through his gold pince-nez, and would answer in a soft, velvety, lisping baritone:

"My work is literature."

After completing his course at the university, Vladimir Semyonitch had had a paragraph of theatrical criticism accepted by a newspaper. From this paragraph he passed on to reviewing, and a year later he had advanced to writing a weekly article on literary matters for the same paper. But it does not follow from these facts that he was an amateur, that his literary work was of an ephemeral, haphazard character. Whenever I saw his neat spare figure, his high forehead and long mane of hair, when I listened to his speeches, it always seemed to me that his writing, quite apart from what and how he wrote, was something organically part of him, like the beating of his heart, and that his whole literary programme must have been an integral part of his brain while he was a baby in his mother's womb. Even in his walk, his gestures, his manner of shaking off the ash from his cigarette, I could read this whole programme from A to Z, with all its claptrap, dullness, and honorable sentiments. He was a literary man all over when with an in-

pired face he laid a wreath on the cof- in of some celebrity, or with a grave nd solemn face collected signatures or some address; his passion for mak- ng the acquaintance of distinguished iterary men, his faculty for finding alent even where it was absent, his erpetual enthusiasm, his pulse that vent at one hundred and twenty a inute, his ignorance of life, the gen- inely feminine flutter with which he hrew himself into concerts and liter- ry evenings for the benefit of desti- ute students, the way in which he ravitated towards the young—all this ould have created for him the repu- ation of a writer even if he had not ritten his articles.

He was one of those writers to whom hrases like, "We are but few," or What would life be without strife? orward!" were pre-eminently becom- g, though he never strove with any ne and never did go forward. It did ot even sound mawkish when he fell discoursing of ideals. Every anni- ersary of the University on St. Ta- ana's Day, he got drunk, chanted *audeamus* out of tune, and his beam- g and perspiring countenance seemed say: "See, I'm drunk; I'm keeping up!" But even that suited him.

Vladimir Semyonitch had genuine ith in his literary vocation and his ole programme. He had no doubts, d was evidently very well pleased th himself. Only one thing grieved m—the paper for which he worked d a limited circulation and was not ry influential. But Vladimir Sem- nitch believed that sooner or later would succeed in getting on to a lid magazine where he would have ope and could display himself—and what little distress he felt on this score was pale beside the brilliance of his hopes.

Visiting this charming man, I made the acquaintance of his sister, Vera Semyonovna, a woman doctor. At first sight, what struck me about this woman was her look of exhaustion and ex- treme ill-health. She was young, with a good figure and regular, rather large features, but in comparison with her agile, elegant, and talkative brother she seemed angular, listless, slovenly, and sullen. There was something strained, cold, apathetic in her movements, smiles, and words; she was not liked, and was thought proud and not very intelligent.

In reality, I fancy, she was resting.

"My dear friend," her brother would often say to me, sighing and flinging back his hair in his picturesque liter- ary way, "one must never judge by appearances! Look at this book: it has long ago been read. It is warped, tat- tered, and lies in the dust uncared for; but open it, and it will make you weep and turn pale. My sister is like that book. Lift the cover and peep into her soul, and you will be horror- stricken. Vera passed in some three months through experiences that would have been ample for a whole lifetime!"

Vladimir Semyonitch looked round him, took me by the sleeve, and began to whisper:

"You know, after taking her degree she married, for love, an architect. It's a complete tragedy! They had hardly been married a month when—whew—her husband died of typhus. But that was not all. She caught typhus from him, and when, on her recovery, she learnt that her Ivan was dead, she took

a good dose of morphia. If it had not been for vigorous measures taken by her friends, my Vera would have been by now in Paradise. Tell me, isn't it a tragedy? And is not my sister like an *ingénue,* who has played already all the five acts of her life? The audience may stay for the farce, but the *ingénue* must go home to rest."

After three months of misery Vera Semyonovna had come to live with her brother. She was not fitted for the practice of medicine, which exhausted her and did not satisfy her; she did not give one the impression of knowing her subject, and I never once heard her say anything referring to her medical studies.

She gave up medicine, and, silent and unoccupied, as though she were a prisoner, spent the remainder of her youth in colorless apathy, with bowed head and hanging hands. The only thing to which she was not completely indifferent, and which brought some brightness into the twilight of her life, was the presence of her brother, whom she loved. She loved him himself and his programme; she was full of reverence for his articles; and when she was asked what her brother was doing, she would answer in a subdued voice as though afraid of waking or distracting him: "He is writing. . . ." Usually when he was at his work she used to sit beside him, her eyes fixed on his writing hand. She used at such moments to look like a sick animal warming itself in the sun. . . .

One winter evening Vladimir Semyonitch was sitting at his table writing a critical article for his newspaper: Vera Semyonovna was sitting beside him, staring as usual at his writing hand. The critic wrote rapidly, without erasures or corrections. The pen scratched and squeaked. On the table near the writing hand there lay open a freshly-cut volume of a thick magazine, containing a story of peasant life, signed with two initials. Vladimir Semyonitch was enthusiastic; he thought the author was admirable in his handling of the subject, suggested Turgenev in his descriptions of nature, was truthful, and had an excellent knowledge of the life of the peasantry. The critic himself knew nothing of peasant life except from books and hearsay, but his feelings and his inner convictions forced him to believe the story. He foretold a brilliant future for the author, assured him he should await the conclusion of the story with great impatience, and so on.

"Fine story!" he said, flinging himself back in his chair and closing his eyes with pleasure. "The tone is extremely good."

Vera Semyonovna looked at him, yawned aloud, and suddenly asked an unexpected question. In the evening she had a habit of yawning nervously and asking short, abrupt questions, not always relevant.

"Volodya," she asked, "what is the meaning of non-resistance to evil?"

"Non-resistance to evil!" repeated her brother, opening his eyes.

"Yes. What do you understand by it?"

"You see, my dear, imagine that thieves or brigands attack you, and you, instead of . . ."

"No, give me a logical definition."

"A logical definition? Um! Well." Vladimir Semyonitch pondered. "Non-resistance to evil means an attitude of

non-interference with regard to all that in the sphere of mortality is called evil."

Saying this, Vladimir Semyonitch bent over the table and took up a novel. This novel, written by a woman, dealt with the painfulness of the irregular position of a society lady who was living under the same roof with her lover and her illegitimate child. Vladimir Semyonitch was pleased with the excellent tendency of the story, the plot and the presentation of it. Making a brief summary of the novel, he selected the best passages and added to them in his account: "How true to reality, how living, how picturesque! The author is not merely an artist; he is also a subtle psychologist who can see into the hearts of his characters. Take, for example, this vivid description of the emotions of the heroine on meeting her husband," and so on.

"Volodya," Vera Semyonovna interrupted his critical effusions, "I've been haunted by a strange idea since yesterday. I keep wondering where we should all be if human life were ordered on the basis of non-resistance to evil?"

"In all probability, nowhere. Non-resistance to evil would give the full rein to the criminal will, and, to say nothing of civilization, this would leave not one stone standing upon another anywhere on earth."

"What would be left?"

"Bashi-Bazouke and brothels. In my next article I'll talk about that perhaps. Thank you for reminding me."

And a week later my friend kept his promise. That was just at the period —in the eighties—when people were beginning to talk and write of non-resistance, of the right to judge, to punish, to make war; when some people in our set were beginning to do without servants, to retire into the country, to work on the land, and to renounce animal food and carnal love.

After reading her brother's article, Vera Semyonovna pondered and hardly perceptibly shrugged her shoulders.

"Very nice!" she said. "But still there's a great deal I don't understand. For instance, in Leskov's story 'Belonging to the Cathedral' there is a queer gardener who sows for the benefit of all—for customers, for beggars, and any who care to steal. Did he behave sensibly?"

From his sister's tone and expression Vladimir Semyonitch saw that she did not like his article, and, almost for the first time in his life, his vanity as an author sustained a shock. With a shade of irritation he answered:

"Theft is immoral! To sow for thieves is to recognize the right of thieves to existence. What would you think if I were to establish a newspaper and, dividing it into sections, provide for blackmailing as well as for liberal ideas? Following the example of that gardener, I ought, logically, to provide a section for blackmailers, the intellectual scoundrels? Yes."

Vera Semyonovna made no answer. She got up from the table, moved languidly to the sofa and lay down.

"I don't know, I know nothing about it," she said musingly. "You are probably right, but it seems to me, I feel something false in our resistance to evil, as though there were something concealed or unsaid. God knows, perhaps our methods of resisting evil belong to the category of prejudices which

have become so deeply rooted in us, that we are incapable of parting with them, and therefore cannot form a correct judgment of them."

"How do you mean?"

"I don't know how to explain to you. Perhaps man is mistaken in thinking that he is obliged to resist evil and has a right to do so, just as he is mistaken in thinking, for instance that the heart looks like an ace of hearts. It is very possible in resisting evil we ought not to use force, but to use what is the very opposite of force—if you, for instance, don't want this picture stolen from you, you ought to give it away rather than lock it up. . . ."

"That's clever, very clever! If I want to marry a rich, vulgar woman, she ought to prevent me from such a shabby action by hastening to make me an offer herself!"

The brother and sister talked till midnight without understanding each other. If any outsider had overheard them he would hardly have been able to make out what either of them was driving at.

They usually spent the evening at home. There were no friends' houses to which they could go, and they felt no need for friends; they only went to the theater when there was a new play —such was the custom in literary circles—they did not go to concerts, for they did not care for music.

"You may think what you like," Vera Semyonoyna began again the next day, "but for me the question is to a great extent settled. I am firmly convinced that I have no grounds for resisting evil directed against me personally. If they want to kill me, let them. My defending myself will not make the murderer better. All I have now to decide is the second half of the question: how I ought to behave to evil directed against my neighbors?"

"Vera, mind you don't become rabid!" said Vladimir Semyonitch, laughing. "I see non-resistance is becoming your *idée fixe!*"

He wanted to turn off these tedious conversations with a jest, but somehow it was beyond a jest; his smile was artificial and sour. His sister gave up sitting beside his table and gazing reverently at his writing hand, and he felt every evening that behind him on the sofa lay a person who did not agree with him. And his back grew stiff and numb, and there was a chill in his soul. An author's vanity is vindictive, implacable, incapable of forgiveness, and his sister was the first and only person who had laid bare and disturbed that uneasy feeling, which is like a big box of crockery, easy to unpack but impossible to pack up again as it was before.

Weeks and months passed by, and his sister clung to her ideas, and did not sit down by the table. One spring evening Vladimir Semyonitch was sitting at his table writing an article. He was reviewing a novel which described how a village schoolmistress refused the man whom she loved and who loved her, a man both wealthy and intellectual simply because marriage made her work as a schoolmistress impossible. Vera Semyonovna lay on the sofa and brooded.

"My God, how slow it is!" she said, stretching. "How insipid and empty life is! I don't know what to do with myself, and you are wasting your best years in goodness knows what. Like

ome alchemist, you are rummaging in old rubbish that nobody wants. My God!"

Vladimir Semyonitch dropped his pen and slowly looked round at his sister.

"It's depressing to look at you!" said his sister. "Wagner in 'Faust' dug up worms, but he was looking for a treasure, anyway, and you are looking for worms for the sake of the worms."

"That's vague!"

"Yes, Volodya; all these days I've been thinking, I've been thinking painfully for a long time, and I have come to the conclusion that you are hopelessly reactionary and conventional. Come, ask yourself what is the object of your zealous, conscientious work? Tell me, what is it? Why, everything has long ago been extracted that can be extracted from that rubbish in which you are always rummaging. You may pound water in a mortar and analyse it as long as you like, you'll make nothing more of it than the chemists have made already. . . ."

"Indeed!" drawled Vladimir Semyonitch, getting up. "Yes, all this is old rubbish because these ideas are eternal; but what do you consider new, then?"

"You undertake to work in the domain of thought; it is for you to think of something new. It's not for me to teach you."

"Me—an alchemist!" the critic cried in wonder and indignation, screwing up his eyes ironically. "Art, progress—all that is alchemy?"

"You see, Volodya, it seems to me that if all you thinking people had set yourselves to solving great problems, as these little questions that you fuss about now would solve themselves by the way. If you go up in a balloon to see a town, you will incidentally, without any effort, see the fields and the villages and the rivers as well. When stearine is manufactured, you get glycerine as a by-product. It seems to me that contemporary thought has settled on one spot and stuck to it. It is prejudiced, apathetic, timid, afraid to take a wide titanic flight, just as you and I are afraid to climb on a high mountain; it is conservative."

Such conversations could not but leave traces. The relations of the brother and sister grew more and more strained every day. The brother became unable to work in his sister's presence, and grew irritable when he knew his sister was lying on the sofa, looking at his back; while the sister frowned nervously and stretched when, trying to bring back the past, he attempted to share his enthusiasms with her. Every evening she complained of being bored, and talked about independence of mind and those who are in the rut of tradition. Carried away by her new ideas, Vera Semyonovna proved that the work that her brother was so engrossed in was conventional, that it was a vain effort of conservative minds to preserve what had already served its turn and was vanishing from the scene of action. She made no end of comparisons. She compared her brother at one time to an alchemist, then to a musty old Believer who would sooner die than listen to reason. By degrees there was a perceptible change in her manner of life, too. She was capable of lying on the sofa all day long doing nothing but thinking, while her face wore a cold, dry expression such as one sees in one-sided people of strong faith. She began to refuse the attentions of

the servants, swept and tidied her own room, cleaned her own boots and brushed her own clothes. Her brother could not help looking with irritation and even hatred at her cold face when she went about her menial work. In that work, which was always performed with a certain solemnity, he saw something strained and false, he saw something pharisaical and affected. And knowing he could not touch her by persuasion, he carped at her and teased her like a schoolboy.

"You won't resist evil, but you resist my having servants!" he taunted her. "If servants are an evil, why do you oppose it? That's inconsistent!"

He suffered, was indignant and even ashamed. He felt ashamed when his sister begun doing odd things before strangers.

"It's awful, my dear fellow," he said to me in private, waving his hands in despair. "It seems that our *ingénue* has remained to play a part in the farce, too. She's become morbid to the marrow of her bones! I've washed my hands of her, let her think as she likes; but why does she talk, why does she excite me? She ought to think what it means for me to listen to her. What I feel when in my presence she has the effrontery to support her errors by blasphemously quoting the teaching of Christ! It chokes me! It makes me hot all over to hear my sister propounding her doctrines and trying to distort the Gospel to suit her, when she purposely refrains from mentioning how the money-changers were driven out of the Temple. That's, my dear fellow, what comes of being half educated, undeveloped! That's what comes of medical studies which provide no general culture!"

One day on coming home from the office, Vladimir Semyonitch found his sister crying. She was sitting on the sofa with her head bowed, wringing her hands, and tears were flowing freely down her cheeks. The critic's good heart throbbed with pain. Tears fell from his eyes, too, and he longed to pet his sister, to forgive her, to beg her forgiveness, and to live as they used to before. . . . He knelt down and kissed her head, her hands, her shoulders. . . . She smiled, smiled bitterly, unaccountably, while he with a cry of joy jumped up, seized the magazine from the table and said warmly:

"Hurrah! We'll live as we used to, Verotchka! With God's blessing! And I've such a surprise for you here! Instead of celebrating the occasion with champagne, let us read it together! A splendid, wonderful thing!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Vera Semyonovna, pushing away the book in alarm. "I've read it already! I don't want it, I don't want it!"

"When did you read it?"

"A year . . . two years ago. . . . I read it long ago, and I know it, I know it!"

"H'm! . . . You're a fanatic!" her brother said coldly, flinging the magazine on to the table.

"No, you are a fanatic, not I! You!" And Vera Semyonovna dissolved into tears again. Her brother stood before her, looked at her quivering shoulders and thought. He thought, not of the agonies of loneliness endured by any one who begins to think in a new way of his own, not of the inevitable sufferings of a genuine spiritual revolution, but of the outrage of his programme, the outrage of his author's vanity.

From this time he treated his sister

coldly, with careless irony, and he endured her presence in the room as one endures the presence of old women that are dependent on one. For her part, she left off disputing with him and met all of his arguments, jeers, and attacks with a condescending silence which irritated him more than ever.

One summer morning Vera Semyonovna, dressed for traveling with a satchel over her shoulder, went in to her brother and coldly kissed him on the forehead.

"Where are you going?" he asked with surprise.

"To the province of N. to do vaccination work." Her brother went out into the street with her.

"So that's what you've decided upon, you queer girl," he muttered. "Don't you want some money?"

"No, thank you. Good-bye."

The sister shook her brother's hand and set off.

"Why, don't you have a cab?" cried Vladimir Semyonitch.

She did not answer. Her brother gazed after her, watched her rusty-looking waterproof, the swaying of her figure as she slouched along, forced himself to sigh, but did not succeed in rousing a feeling of regret. His sister had become a stranger to him. And he was a stranger to her. Anyway, she did not once look round.

Going back to his room, Vladimir Semyonitch at once sat down to the table and began to work at his article.

I never saw Vera Semyonovna again. Where she is now I do not know. And Vladimir Semyonitch went on writing his articles, laying wreaths on coffins, singing *Gaudeamus*, busying himself over the Mutual Aid Society of Moscow Journalists.

He fell ill with inflammation of the lungs; he was ill in bed for three months —at first at home, and afterwards in the Golitsyn Hospital. An abscess developed in his knee. People said he ought to be sent to the Crimea, and began getting up a collection for him. But he did not go to the Crimea—he died. We buried him in the Vagankovsky Cemetery, on the left side, where artists and literary men are buried.

One day we writers were sitting in the Tatars' restaurant. I mentioned that I had lately been in the Vagankovsky Cemetery and had seen Vladimir Semyonitch's grave there. It was utterly neglected and almost indistinguishable from the rest of the ground, the cross had fallen; it was necessary to collect a few roubles to put it in order.

But they listened to what I said unconcernedly, made no answer, and I could not collect a farthing. No one remembered Vladimir Semyonitch. He was utterly forgotten.

The Black Monk

CHAPTER I

NERVES

ANDREY VASIL'ICH KOVRIN, Master Arts, was overworked and nervous. e was not being treated, but one day hile sitting with a doctor at wine he ppened casually to speak about his alth. The physician advised him to ss the spring and summer in the untry. Opportunely he received then long letter from Tanya Pesotski, in- ing him to visit Borisovka. He de- ded that he really required a change. It was April. He went to his family tate of Kovrinka for three weeks; en, the roads being clear, he started wheels to see his former guardian d tutor, Pesotski, the great horticul- rist. From Kovrinka to Borisovka, ere the Pesotskis lived, it was only venty versts, and it was a pleasure take the drive.

Egor Semenyeh Pesotski's house was ge, with columns and lions, but the ster was cracking. The old park, ere and gloomy, laid out in the Eng- n style, extended for nearly a verst m the house to the river, and fin- ed in abruptly precipitous clayey nks, on which there grew old pines h bare roots that looked like shaggy ws; down below the water glittered sociably, and snipe flitted along its rface with plaintive cries. When re you always had the feeling that u must sit down and write a ballad. wever, near the house, in the court- yard and in the fruit orchard, which together with the nurseries covered about thirty acres, it was gay and cheerful even in bad weather. Such wonderful roses, lilies and camellias, such tulips of all imaginable hues, beginning with brilliant white and finishing with tints as black as soot, such a wealth of flowers as Pesotski possessed Kovrin had never seen in any other place. It was only the beginning of spring, and the real luxuriance of the flower-beds was still hidden in the hothouses; but even those which blossomed in the borders along the walks and here and there on the flower-beds were sufficient to make you feel, when you passed through the garden, that you were in the kingdom of delicate tints, especially in the early morning, when a dewdrop glistened brightly on each petal.

The decorative part of the garden, which Pesotski called contemptuously a mere trifle, had greatly impressed Kovrin in his childhood. What wonderful whimsicalities were to be found there, what far-fetched monstrosities and mockeries of nature! There were espaliers of fruit trees, pear trees that had the form of pyramidal poplars. oaks and limes shaped like balls, an umbrella made of an apple tree, arches, monograms, candelabra and even 1862 formed by a plum tree; this date de-

noted the year when Pesotski first began to occupy himself with horticulture. There you also found pretty graceful trees with straight strong stems like palms, and only when you examined them closely you saw that they were gooseberries and currants. But what chiefly made the garden pay and produced an animated appearance was the constant movement in it. From early morning till evening people with wheelbarrows, shovels and watering-pots swarmed like ants round the trees, bushes, avenues and flower-beds.

Kovrin arrived at the Pesotskis' in the evening, at past nine o'clock. He found Tania and her father in a very anxious mood. The clear starlit sky and the falling thermometer foretold a morning frost; the head gardener, Ivan Karlych, had gone to town, and there was nobody who could be relied on. During supper nothing but morning frost was talked of, and they settled that Tania was not to go to bed, but walk through the gardens and see if all was in order after midnight, and that her father would get up at three or probably earlier.

Kovrin sat up with Tania, and after midnight he went with her into the orchard. It was very cold. In the yard there was a strong smell of burning. In the large orchard, which was called the commercial orchard and brought Egor Semenych a clear yearly profit of several thousand roubles, a thick, black, biting smoke spread along the earth, and by enveloping the trees saved those thousands from the frost. The trees were planted here in regular rows like the squares of a chess-board, and they looked like ranks of soldiers, this strictly pedentical regularity together with the exact size and similarity of the stems and crowns of the trees made the picture monotonous and dull. Kovrin and Tania passed along the rows, where bonfires of manure, straw and all sorts of refuse were smouldering, and occasionally they met workmen, who were wandering about in the smoke like shadows. Only plums, cherries and some sorts of apple trees were in full blossom, but the whole orchard was smothered in smoke, and it was only when they reached the nursery that Kovrin could draw a long breath.

"From my childhood the smoke here has made me sneeze," he said, shrugging his shoulders; "but I still do not understand how this smoke can protect the trees from frost."

"The smoke takes the place of clouds when they are absent . . ." Tania answered.

"Why are clouds necessary?"

"In dull and cloudy weather there is never night frost."

"Really?"

He laughed and took her hand. Her broad, serious, cold face, with its finely marked black eyebrows, the high turned up collar of her coat, which prevented her from moving her head with ease, her whole thin, *svelte* figure, with skirts well tucked up to protect them from the dew, affected him.

"Good Lord, she's already grown up!" he said. "When I last drove away from here, five years ago, you were still quite a child. You were a thin, long-legged, bare-headed girl in short petticoats, and I teased you and called you the heron. . . . What time does!"

"Yes, five years!" Tania sighed. "Much water has flowed away since

en. Tell me, Andryusha, quite can-
dly," she said rapidly, looking into his
ce, "have we become strangers to
u? But, why should I ask? You're
man, you are now living your own
eresting life, you are great. . . .
trangement is so natural! But, how-
er it may be, Andryusha, I want you
consider us as your own people. We
ve that right."

"Of course you have, Tania!"

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, honour bright."

"You were surprised to-day to see
had so many of your portraits. You
ow my father adores you. Some-
nes I think that he loves you more
n he does me. He is proud of you.
u are a scholar, an extraordinary
n, you have made a brilliant career,
l he is convinced that you have be-
me all that because he brought you
. I do not prevent him from think-
this. Let him."

The day began to break; this was
efly to be noticed by the distinct-
s with which the clouds of smoke
re perceptible in the air, and the
k of the trees became visible.
ghtingales were singing and the cry
the quail was borne from the fields.

"It's time to go to bed now," Tania
l. "How cold it is!" She took his
n. "Thank you, Andryusha, for com-
. We have but few acquaintances
e, and they are not interesting. We
e nothing but the garden, the gar-
, the garden—nothing but that.
ndard, half-standard," she laughed.
pins, rennets, codlins, grafting, bud-
g. . . . All, all our life has gone
the garden—I never dream of any-
g but apples and pears. Of course,
this is good and useful, but some-
times I wish for something else for
variety. I remember when you used to
come for the holidays or simply on a
visit the house seemed to grow fresher
and lighter; it was as if the covers had
been taken off the lustres and the chairs.
I was a child then, still I understood."

She talked for a long time and with
great feeling. Suddenly the idea en-
tered his head that in the course of the
summer he might become attached to
this little, weak, loquacious creature, he
might be carried away and fall in love
—in their position it was so possible
and so natural! This thought amused
and moved him; he bent over her
charming troubled face and began to
sing in a low voice:

"Onegin, I'll not hide from you
I love Tatiana madly . . ."

When they reached the house, Egor
Semenych was already up. Kovrin did
not want to sleep; he began to talk
with the old man and he returned with
him to the garden. Egor Semenych was
a tall, broad-shouldered man with a
large stomach; he suffered from
breathlessness, but he always walked so
fast that it was difficult to keep up
with him. He always had an extremely
worried look, and he was always hurry-
ing somewhere, with an expression that
seemed to say if he were too late by one
minute even, all would be lost!

"Here's a strange thing, my dear fel-
low," he said, stopping to take breath.
"It's freezing on the ground, as you
see, but if you raise the thermometer
on a stick about fourteen feet above
earth it's warm there. . . . Why is
it?"

"I really don't know," Kovrin said,
laughing.

"Hm. . . . Of course, one can't know everything. . . . However vast a man's understanding may be it can't comprehend everything. You've chiefly gone in for philosophy?"

"Yes. I lecture on psychology, but I study philosophy in general."

"And it does not bore you?"

"On the contrary, it's my very existence."

"Well, may God prosper your work . . ." Egor Semenych exclaimed, and he stroked his grey whiskers reflectively. "God prosper you! . . . I'm very glad for you. . . . Very glad, indeed, my boy. . . ."

Suddenly he seemed to listen, an expression of anger passed over his face and he ran off to one side and was soon lost to sight among the trees in the clouds of smoke.

"Who has tethered a horse to an apple tree?" his despairing, heartrending cry could be heard. "What villain and scoundrel has dared to tie a horse to an apple-tree? Good God, good God! They have dirtied, spoilt, damaged, ruined it. The orchard is lost! The orchard is destroyed! My God!"

When he returned to Kovrin he looked worn out and insulted.

"What can you do with this accursed people?" he said in a plaintive voice, clasping his hands. "Stepka was carting manure during the night and has tied his horse to an apple tree! The villain tied the reins so tight round it that the bark has been rubbed in three places. What do you think of that! I spoke to him, and he only stood open-mouthed, blinking his eyes! He ought to be hanged."

When he was somewhat calmer he embraced Kovrin and kissed him on th cheek.

"Well, God help you. . . . God he you . . ." he mumbled. "I'm ver glad you've come. Delighted beyon words. . . . Thank you."

Then he went round the whole ga den at the same rapid pace and wit the same troubled expression, an showed his former ward all the ho houses, conservatories and fruit-shed also his two apiaries, which he calle the wonder of the century.

While they were walking round th sun rose and shed its brilliant rays ov the garden. It became warm. For seeing a bright, joyous and long da Kovrin remembered it was only the b ginning of May, and that the who summer lay before them, also brigh joyous and long, and suddenly a gla some, youthful feeling was aroused his breast, like he used to have wh running about that garden in his chil hood. He embraced the old man a kissed him tenderly. They were bo much affected as they went into t house, where they drank tea with crea out of old china cups, and ate ri satisfying cracknels—these trifles aga reminded Kovrin of his childhood a youth. The beautiful present and t memories that were aroused in him the past were blended together; his so was full and rejoiced.

He waited for Tania to get up a had coffee with her and then a wa after which he went into his own roo and sat down to work. He read wi attention, made notes, only raising h eyes from time to time to look out the open window, or at the fresh flo ers, still wet with dew that were in vase on his table, and then he aga

ered his eyes to his book, and it ap-red to him that every nerve in his tem vibrated with satisfaction.

CHAPTER II

A PALE FACE!

N the country he continued to lead same nervous and restless life as in n. He read and wrote very much, learned Italian, and when he was king he thought all the time of the asure he would have in sitting down work again. Everybody was aston-ed how little he slept; if he hap-ed to doze for half an hour during day he would afterwards not sleep night, and after a sleepless night felt himself active and gay, as if hing had happened.

He talked much, drank wine and ked expensive cigars. Often, in-d almost every day, some young s from a neighbouring estate, friends Tania's, came to the Pesotskis'. y played on the piano and sang ether. Sometimes another neigh-r, a young man, who played the iin very well, came too. Kovrin lis-ed to the music and singing with lity, and he was quite overcome by which was evidenced by his eyes ing and his head sinking on one ..

ne day after the evening tea he was ng on the balcony reading. At that e Tania—a soprano, one of her nds—a contralto and the young man ring on his violin were practicing ga's celebrated serenade. Kovrin l to make out the words—they were sian—and he was quite unable to erstand their meaning. At last lay-his book aside and listening at-tentively he understood: A girl with a diseased imagination heard one night mysterious sounds in the garden, which were so wonderfully beautiful and strange that she thought they were holy harmonies, but so incomprehensible for us mortals that they ascended again to heaven. Once more Kovrin's eyes be-gan to close. He rose, and feeling quite exhausted he began to walk about the drawing-room and then about the danc-ing hall. When they stopped singing he took Tania's arm and led her on to the balcony.

"Ever since the morning an old legend has been running in my head," he said. "I don't remember if I read it, or whether it was told me, but the legend is a strange one, and not like any other. To begin with it is not very clear. A thousand years ago a certain monk, clad in black, was walking in the desert somewhere in Syria or Arabia. . . . A few miles from the place where he was walking some fishermen saw another black monk moving slowly across the surface of a lake. This other monk was a mirage. Now you must forget all the laws of optics, which the legend evidently does not admit, and listen to the continuation. From the mirage another mirage was obtained, and from that one a third, so that the image of the black monk was reproduced with-out end in one sphere of the atmos-phere after another. He was seen sometimes in Africa, sometimes in Spain, sometimes in India, then again in the far North. . . . At last he went beyond the bounds of the earth's at-mosphere and is now wandering over the whole universe, always unable to enter into the conditions where he would be able to disappear. Perhaps at pres-

ent he may be seen somewhere on Mars or on some star of the Southern Cross. But, my dear, the main point, the very essence of the whole legend, consists in this, that exactly a thousand years from the time the monk was walking in the desert the mirage will again be present in the atmosphere of the world, and it will show itself to men. It appears that those thousand years are nearly accomplished. . . . Accordingly to the legend we can expect the Black Monk either to-day or to-morrow."

"A strange mirage," Tiana said. She did not like the legend.

"But the strangest thing is that I can't remember from where this legend has got into my head," Kovrin said, laughing. "Have I read it? Was it told me? Or perhaps I have dreamed about the Black Monk? By God, I can't remember. But the legend interests me. I think of it all day long."

Allowing Tania to return to her guests he left the house, and plunged in meditation he passed along the flower-beds. The sun was already setting. The flowers, perhaps because they had just been watered, exhaled a moist irritating odour. In the house they had again begun to sing, and at that distance the fiddle sounded like a human voice. Kovrin, straining his memory to remember where he had heard or read the legend, bent his steps towards the park, walking slowly, and imperceptibly he arrived at the river.

Running down the steep footpath that passed by the bare roots he came to the water, disturbing some snipe and frightening a pair of ducks. Some of the tops of the gloomy pines were still illuminated by the rays of the setting sun, but on the surface of the riv evening had already settled dow Kovrin crossed the footbridge to t other bank. Before him lay a wi field of young rye not yet in flowe Neither a human habitation nor a li ing soul was to be seen near or far, a it seemed as if this footpath, if on you went far enough along it, wou lead to that unknown, mysterious pla into which the sun had just descende and where the glorious blaze of t evening brightness was still widesprea

"What space, what freedom, wh quiet is here!" Kovrin thought as went along the footpath. "It seems if the whole world was looking at m dissembling and waiting, that I shou understand it. . . ."

But just then waves passed over t rye and a light wind touched his ba head. A minute later there was aga a gust of wind, but a stronger on The rye began to rustle, and behind the dull murmur of the pines was hear Kovrin stopped in amazement. On t horizon something like a whirlwind a water-spout—a high black colum stretched from the earth to the sky. outlines were indistinct; from the fi minute it was evident that it did n remain on one spot, but was movi with terrible rapidity—moving straig towards Kovrin, and the nearer it ca the smaller and clearer it became. Ko rin rushed to one side into the rye make room for it, and he had scarce time to do so. . . .

A monk clad in black, with a gr head and black eyebrows, his ar crossed on his breast, was borne p him. . . . His bare feet did not tou the earth. He had already pass Kovrin for a distance of about twel

et, when he looked back at him, nodd his head and smiled affably, but the same time cunningly. What a le—a terribly pale—and thin face! gain beginning to grow larger, he w across the river, struck noiselessly ainst the clayey bank and the pines d, passing through them, disappeared e smoke.

"Well, you see?" Kovrin mumbled. o the legend is true."

Without trying to explain to himself s strange apparition, but feeling ased that he had chanced to be so se, and had seen so distinctly not y the black garb, but even the monk's e and eyes, he returned home in asant agitation.

In the park and the gardens people re quietly moving about; in the use they were playing—that meant alone had seen the monk. He was y anxious to tell Tania and Egor menych all he had seen, but he ught that they would certainly con- er his words mere nonsense, and it uld frighten them—it was best to ain silent. He laughed loudly, he g and danced the mazurka, he was and everybody—the guests and ia—thought that his face had never ked so radiant and inspired, and t he certainly was a most interest- man.

CHAPTER III

SHE LOVES

AFTER supper, when their guests had arted, he went to his room and lay n on the sofa: he wanted to think ut the monk. But a minute later ia entered the room.

"Here, Andryusha are some of father's articles; read them," she said, giving him a parcel of pamphlets and proofs. "They are splendid articles. He writes very well."

"Well, indeed," said Egor Semenych, with a forced laugh, following her into the room; he was confused. "Don't listen to her, please, and don't read them. However, if you want to go to sleep you may as well read them: they are excellent soporifics."

"I think them excellent articles," Tania said, with deep conviction. "Read them, Andryusha, and persuade papa to write oftener. He might write a whole course of horticulture."

Egor Semenych forced a laugh, blushed and began to say such phrases as confused authors are wont to say. At last he gave in.

"If you must, then first read this article by Gaucher and these Russian notices," he murmured, turning the pamphlets over with trembling hands, "or else you won't understand it. Before reading my refutation you must know what I refute. However, it's all nonsense . . . and very dull. Besides, I should say it's time to go to bed."

Tania left the room. Egor Semenych sat down on the sofa next to Kovrin and sighed deeply.

"Yes, my dear fellow . . ." he began after a short silence. "So it is, my most amiable Master of Arts. Here am I writing articles, taking part in exhibitions, receiving medals. . . . People say Pesotski has apples the size of a man's head, people say Pesotski has made a fortune by his orchards and gardens. In a word, 'Kochubey is rich and famous.' Query: To what does all this lead? The garden is really beautiful—a model garden. . . . It is not simply

a garden, it is an institution, possessing great importance for the empire, because it is, so to speak, a step in a new era of Russian economy—of Russian industry. But what for? For what object?"

"The business speaks for itself."

"That is not what I mean. I ask: What will become of the gardens when I die? In the condition you see it now, it will not exist for a single month without me. The whole secret of its success is not because the garden is large and there are many labourers, but because I love the work—you understand? I love it, perhaps more than my own self. Look at me. I do everything myself. I work from morning to night. I do all the grafting myself. I do all the pruning myself—all the planting—everything. When I am assisted I am jealous and irritable to rudeness. The whole secret lies in love, that is, in the vigilant master's eye, in the master's hand too, in the feeling that when you go anywhere, to pay a visit of an hour, you sit there and your heart is not easy; you're not quite yourself, you're afraid something may happen in the garden. When I die who will look after it all? Who will work? A gardener? Workmen? Yes? I tell you, my good friend, the chief enemy in our business is not the hare, not the cockchafer, not the frost, but the stranger."

"But Tania?" Kovrin asked, laughing. "She can't be more injurious than the hare. She loves and understands the business."

"Yes, she loves and understands it. If after my death she gets the garden, and becomes the mistress, I could wish for nothing better. But if, God forbid it, she should get married?" Egor Semenych whispered and looked at Kovrin with alarm. "That's just what I fear! She gets married, children arrive, and then there's no time to think of the garden. What I chiefly fear is that she'll get married to some young fellow who'll be stingy and will let the garden to some tradesman, and the whole place will go to the devil in the first year! In our business women are the scourge of God!"

Egor Semenych sighed and was silent for a few moments.

"Perhaps it is egoism, but, to speak frankly, I don't want Tania to marry I'm afraid. There's a young fop with a fiddle, who comes here and scrapes at it; I know very well Tania will not marry him. I know it very well, but I can't bear him! In general, dear boy, I'm a great oddity. I confess it."

Egor Semenych rose and paced about the room for some time, much agitated; it was evident that he wanted to say something very important, but could not make up his mind to do so.

"I love you very much, and will speak to you quite frankly," he said at last, and thrust his hands into his pockets. "There are certain ticklish subjects I regard quite simply, and I say quite openly what I think of them. I cannot bear so-called hidden thoughts. I say to you plainly: You are the only man I would not be afraid to give my daughter to. You are a clever man, you have a good heart, and you would not allow my cherished work to perish. But the chief reason is—I love you as if you were my son—and I am proud of you. If you and Tania could settle a little romance between yourselves, why—what then? I would be very glad—very happy! As an honest man I say this quite openly, without mincing matters."

Kovrin laughed. Egor Semenych

ened the door to leave the room, but stopped on the threshold.

"If a son were to be born to you and nia I'd make a gardener of him," he d reflectively. "However, these are pty thoughts. . . . Sleep well!"

Left alone, Kovrin lay down more comtably on the sofa and began to look ough the articles. One was entitled: f Intermediate Culture," another was led: "A few words concerning Mr. ——'s remarks on the digging up of und for a new garden," a third was: ore about the budding of dormant s"; they were all of a similar nature. what an uneasy, uneven tone, what vous almost unhealthy passion! Here s an article one would suppose of the st peaceful nature, and on the most inerent subject: it was about the Rusn Antonov apple. However, Egor nenych began with, *"audiatur altera s,"* and finished, "*sapienti sat,*" and ween these two quotations there was te a fountain of various poisonous ds addressed to the "learned ignorance our qualified gardeners who observe ure from the height of their nedras," or else M. Gaucher, "whose cess has been created by the unlearned the dilettante." Here again, quite of place, was an insincere regret that as now no longer possible to flog the sants who stole fruit and broke the s.

The work is pretty, charming, healthy, even here are passions and war," vrin thought. "It must be that everyre and in all arenas of human activity llectual people are nervous and rekable for their heightened sensitive-s. Apparently this is necessary."

He thought of Tania, who was so de-ted with her father's articles. She was small, pale and so thin that her collar-bones were visible; she had dark, wide-open clever eyes that were always looking into something, searching for something; her gait was short-stepped and hurried like her father's; she spoke much, she liked to argue, and then even the most unimportant phrase was accompanied by expressive looks and gestures. She certainly was nervous to the highest degree.

Kovrin continued to read, but he could understand nothing, so he threw the book away. The same pleasant excitement he had felt when he danced the mazurka and listened to the music now overcame him again, and aroused in him numberless thoughts. He rose and began to walk about the room, thinking of the black monk. It entered his head that if he alone had seen this strange supernatural monk it must be because he was ill and had hallucinations. This reflection alarmed him, but not for long.

"But I feel very well, and I do nobody any harm; therefore there is nothing bad in my hallucinations," he thought, and he again felt quite contented.

He sat down on the sofa and seized his head in both hands, trying to restrain the incomprehensible joy that filled his whole being, then he went to the table and began to work. But the thoughts he read in the books did not satisfy him. He wanted something gigantic, immense, astounding. Towards morning he undressed and reluctantly lay down in bed: he ought to sleep!

When he heard Egor Semenych's footsteps going down to the garden, Kovrin rang the bell and ordered the man-servant to bring him some wine. He drank several glasses of Château-Laffitte with

pleasure, and then covered himself up to the head; his senses became dim and he went to sleep.

CHAPTER IV

TEARS OF TANIA

Egor Semenych and Tania often quarreled and said unpleasant things to each other.

One morning they had a quarrel. Tania began to cry and went to her room. She did not appear at dinner nor at tea. At first Egor Semenych went about looking very important and sulky, as if he wished everybody to know that for him the interests of justice and order stood above everything in the world, but soon he was unable to maintain that character and became depressed. He wandered sadly about the park and constantly sighed: "Oh, good God, good God!" At dinner he would not eat a crumb. At last feeling guilty and having qualms of conscience he knocked at his daughter's locked door and called to her timidly:

"Tania, Tania!"

And in answer he heard on the other side of the door a weak voice exhausted with crying, but still very positive, reply:

"Leave me alone, I beg you!"

The master's trouble affected the whole house, even the people working in the garden were under its influence. Kovrin was immersed in his own interesting work, but at last he too became sad and felt awkward. In order in some measure to dissipate the general gloomy mood he decided to intervene, and early in the evening he knocked at Tania's door. He was admitted.

"Oh, oh, what a shame!" he began jokingly, looking with astonishment at tania's tear-stained, sad little face that was all covered with red blotches. "Is it possible it is so serious? Oh, oh!"

"If you only knew how he tortures me!" she said, and tears—bitter, plentiful tears—welled up in her large eyes. "He has worn me quite out!" she continued, wringing her hands. "I said nothing to him . . . nothing at all. . . . I only said there is no need to keep . . . extra workmen if . . . if it is possible to get day labourers whenever they are wanted. Why, why the workmen have been doing nothing for a whole week. . . . I . . . I only said this and he shouted at me and he told me . . . many offensive, many deeply insulting things. Why, why?"

"Enough! Enough!" Kovrin said as he arranged a lock of her hair. "You have abused each other, you have wept, and that's enough. One must not be angry for long, that's wrong . . . all the more because he loves you tenderly."

"He . . . he has spoilt my whole life," Tania continued. "I am only insulted and . . . wounded here. He considers me superfluous in his house. What am I to do? He is right. I'll go away from here to-morrow and become a telegraph girl. . . . Let him . . ."

"Well, well, well. . . . Tania, don't cry. You, mustn't, my dear. . . . You are both hot-headed, irritable, and you are both in fault. Come along, I'll make peace between you."

Kovrin spoke affectionately and persuasively, but she continued to cry, her shoulders shaking and her hands clenched, as if a terrible misfortune had befallen her. He was all the more sorry for her because her grief was not serious, yet she suffered deeply. What trifles were sufficient to make this poor creature un-

happy for a whole day, yes, perhaps even for her whole life! While comforting Tania, Kovrin thought that besides this girl and her father he might search the whole world without being able to find any other people who loved him as one of their family. If it had not been for these two people perhaps he, who had lost both his parents in his early childhood, would not have known to his very death what sincere affection was, nor that naïve, uncritical love that only exists between very near blood relatives. And he felt that his half-diseased, overtaxed nerves were drawn towards the nerves of this weeping, shuddering girl as iron is drawn to the magnet. He could never love a healthy, strong, red-cheeked woman, but pale, fragile, unhappy Tania attracted him.

He was pleased to stroke her hair, pat her shoulders, press her hands and wipe away her tears. At last she stopped crying; but for a long time she continued to complain about her father, and of her difficult, unbearable life in that house, begging Kovrin to enter into her position; then she gradually began to smile and to sigh that God had given her such a bad character, and at last she laughed aloud, called herself a fool and ran out of the room.

Shortly after, when Kovrin went into the garden, Egor Semenych and Tania were walking together in the avenue eating black bread and salt (they were both hungry), as if nothing had happened.

CHAPTER V

RED SPOTS

Delighted that the part of peacemaker had been successful, Kovrin went into the park. While sitting on a bench thinking he heard the sound of wheels and of girls' laughter—visitors had arrived. When the shades of evening had begun to settle down on the gardens faint sounds of a violin and of voices singing reached his ear, and this reminded him of the black monk. Where, in what land or on what planet was that optical incongruity now being borne?

He had scarcely remembered the legend, and recalled to his memory the dark vision he had seen in the rye field, when just before him a middle-sized man with a bare grey head and bare feet, who looked like a beggar, came silently out of the pine wood, walking with small, unheard steps. On his pale, deathlike face the black eyebrows stood out sharply. Nodding affably this beggar or pilgrim came noiselessly and sat down on the bench. Kovrin recognized in him the black monk. For a minute they looked at each other—Kovrin with astonishment; the monk in a kindly and, as on the previous occasion, in a somewhat cunning manner, and with a self-complacent expression.

"But you are a mirage," Kovrin exclaimed; "why are you here and sitting on one place too? That is not in accordance with the legend."

"That's all the same," the monk replied after a pause, in a low quiet voice, turning his face towards Kovrin. "The mirage, the legend and I are all the products of your excited imagination. I am a phantom."

"Then, you do not exist?" Kovrin asked.

"Think what you like," the monk answered with a faint smile. "I exist in your imagination, and your imagination is part of nature, consequently I exist in nature too."

"You have a very old, clever and expressive face; just as if you had really existed for more than a thousand years," Kovrin said. "I did not know that my imagination was capable of creating such phenomena. But why are you looking at me with such rapture? Do I please you?"

"Yes. You are one of the few who are justly called the chosen of God. You serve the eternal truth. Your thoughts, your intentions, your extraordinary science and you whole life bear the godlike, the heavenly stamp, as they are devoted to the reasonable and the beautiful, that is to say, to that which is eternal."

"You said the eternal truth. . . . But can people attain to the eternal truth, and is it necessary for them if there is no eternal life?"

"There is eternal life," the monk answered.

"Do you believe in the immortality of man?"

"Yes, of course. A great brilliant future awaits you men. And the more men like you there are on earth, the sooner this future will be realized. Without you, the servants of the first cause, you who live with discernment and in freedom, the human race would, indeed, be insignificant. Developing in a natural way it would long have waited for the end of its earthly history. You are leading it to the kingdom of eternal truth several thousand years sooner—and in this lies your great service. . . . You incarnate in yourselves the blessing with which God has honoured mankind."

"But what is the object of eternal life?" Kovrin asked.

"The same as of all life—enjoyment. True enjoyment is knowledge, and eternal life offers numberless and inexhaustible sources of knowledge; this is the meaning of: 'in my Father's House are many mansions.'"

"If you only knew how pleasant it is to listen to you," Kovrin said, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"I'm very pleased."

"But I know that when you go away I will be troubled about your reality. You are a vision, a hallucination. Consequently I am physically ill, I am not normal."

"And what of that! Why are you troubled? You are ill because you have worked beyond your strength and you are exhausted, which means that you have sacrificed your health to an idea, and the time is near when you will sacrifice your life to it too. What could be better? It is the object to which all noble natures, gifted from above, constantly aspire."

"If I know that I am mentally diseased, can I believe in myself?"

"How do you know that the men of genius, who are believed in by the whole world, have not also seen visions? Scholars say now that genius is allied to insanity. My friend, only the ordinary people—the herd—are quite well and normal. All this consideration about the nervous century, overwork, degeneration, etc., can only seriously alarm those whose object in life is the present—that is the people of the herd."

"The Romans said: 'mens sana in corpore sano.'"

"Not all that the Romans and Greeks said is true. Overstrain, excitement, ecstacy, all that distinguishes the prophets, the poets, the martyrs for ideas, from ordinary people, is opposed to the animal side of man's nature, that

is, to his physical health. I repeat, if you wish to be healthy and normal go to the herd."

"It is strange, you say what often comes into my mind," Kovrin said. "You appear to have looked into my soul and listened to my most secret thoughts. But let us not speak of me. What do you mean by the eternal truth?"

The monk did not reply. Kovrin glanced at him and could not distinguish his face. The features became misty and melted away. The monk's head and hands gradually disappeared, his body seemed to be blended with the bench and with the evening twilight and then he vanished entirely.

"The hallucination is over," Kovrin said, and he laughed. "What a pity!"

He returned towards the house gay and happy. What little the black monk had said to him flattered not only his self-love, but his whole soul, his whole being. To be one of the chosen, to serve the eternal truth, to stand in the ranks of those who will render mankind worthy of the Kingdom of God a few thousand years sooner than it would otherwise have been, that is, will save mankind from an extra thousand years of struggle, sin and suffering, to sacrifice everything—youth, strength, health, to the idea—to be ready to die for the general good—what a high, what a happy fate! His clean, chaste life, so full of work passed through his memory; he remembered what he himself had learned, what he had taught others, and he arrived at the conclusion that there was no exaggeration in the words the monk had spoken.

Tania came to meet him through the park. She was dressed in another frock.

"Here you are at last!" she said. "We are looking for you everywhere. But what has happened to you?" she said with astonishment, gazing at his enraptured, beaming countenance and his eyes that were brimming over with tears. "How strange you look, Andryusha."

"I am satisfied, Tania," Kovrin said, putting his hands on her shoulders. "I am more than satisfied, I am happy! Tania, dear Tania, you are a most congenial creature! Dear Tania, I am so glad, so glad!"

He kissed both her hands passionately and continued:

"I have just passed through bright, beautiful, unearthly moments. But I cannot tell you all because you would call me mad, or you would not believe me. Let us talk of you. Dear, charming Tania! I love you, and I have become used to love you. Your nearness, our meetings, ten times daily have become a necessity for my soul. I don't know how I shall be able to exist without you, when I go home."

"Well!" and Tania laughed, "you will forget us in two days. We are little people, and you are a great man."

"No, let us talk seriously," he said. "I will take you with me. Yes? Won't you come with me? You want to be mine?"

"Well, well!" Tania said and again she wanted to laugh, but laughter would not come, and red spots came out on her face.

She began to breathe fast, and she walked on very quickly, not towards the house, but deeper into the park.

"I never thought of this . . . never!" she said, clasping her hands as if in despair.

Kovrin followed her and continued to

speak with the same brilliant, excited face.

"I want love that would conquer me entirely, and that love, Tania, you alone can give me. I am happy, happy!"

She was stupefied, she bent, she shrivelled, she seemed suddenly to grow ten years older, and he thought her beautiful and he expressed his thoughts aloud:

"How beautiful she is!"

CHAPTER VI

THE BLACK GUEST

When Egor Semenych heard from Kovrin that the romance had not only begun, but that there was to be a wedding, he walked about the rooms for a long time trying to hide his agitation. His hands began to tremble, his neck seemed to grow thicker and became purple; he ordered his racing droshky to be put to and drove off somewhere. Tania, seeing how he whipped the horse and how low down, almost over his ears, he had pressed his cap, understood his mood, shut herself up in her room and cried all day.

The peaches and plums were already ripening in the hot-houses; the packing and sending off to Moscow of these delicate and tender goods required much attention, trouble and work. Owing to the summer having been very hot and dry, it was necessary to water every tree; this took up much time and labour, besides multitudes of caterpillars appeared on the trees, which the workpeople, as well as Egor Semenych and Tania, crushed with their fingers, to Kovrin's great disgust. Besides all this work it was necessary to accept orders for fruit and trees for the autumn deliveries, and to carry on a large correspondence. While at the busiest time, when it seemed that nobody had a moment to spare, the season for field work came on and took away more than half the hands from the garden. Egor Semenych, very much sunburnt, exhausted and irritated, rushed about now in the gardens, now in the fields, crying that he was torn to pieces, and that he would send a bullet through his head.

There was also all the bustle caused by the preparation of the trousseau, on which the Pesotskis set great store; everybody in the house was made quite dizzy by the click of scissors, the noise of sewing machines, the fumes of hot irons and the caprices of the milliner, a nervous lady, who was easily offended. And, as if on purpose, every day saw the arrival of guests, who had to be entertained and fed, and who often even stayed the night. However, all this drudgery passed by almost unperceived as if in a mist. Tania felt that love and happiness had come upon her unawares, although for some reason from the age of fourteen she had been convinced that Kovrin would be sure to marry her. She was amazed, she was perplexed, she could not believe it herself. . . . At times she was suddenly overpowered by such joy, that she wanted to fly above the clouds, and pray to God there; at others, equally suddenly, she would remember that in August she would have to take leave of her paternal home and her father, or—God knows from where the thought would come—that she was insignificant, small and unworthy of such a great man as Kovrin—then she went to her own room, locked herself in and wept bitterly during several hours. When they had company it would sud-

denly appear to her that Kovrin was uncommonly handsome, and that all the women were in love with him, and were envious of her, then her soul was filled with pride and delight as if she had conquered the whole world, but he had only to smile affably at one of the girls to cause her to tremble with jealousy and retire to her own room; then there were tears again. These new sensations quite took possession of her; she helped her father mechanically, and never noticed the peaches nor the caterpillars, nor the labourers, nor even how quickly the time flew.

Much the same happened to Egor Semenych. He worked from morning to night, he was always hurrying somewhere, he constantly lost his temper, he was irritable, but all this took place in a sort of enchanted state of semi-sleep. It was as if there were two men in him: one was the real Egor Semenych who, listening to his gardener, Ivan Karlych, making his report about the disorders in the gardens, would be indignant, and put his hands to his head in despair; and the other, not the real one who, as if in a half-tipsy state, would suddenly break into the business report in the middle of a word and placing his hand on the gardener's shoulder would begin to murmur:

"Whatever one may say there is much in blood. His mother was a wonderful, a most noble, a most clever woman. It was a delight to look at her good, bright, pure face, like an angel's. She painted beautifully, she wrote verses, she could speak five foreign languages, she sang. . . . . Poor thing, may the heavenly kingdom be hers, she died of consumption."

The unreal Egor Semenych sighed, and after a pause continued:

"When he was a boy growing up in my house, he had the same angelic, bright and good face. He has the same look, the same movements and the same soft, elegant manner of speaking that his mother had. And his intellect! He always astonished us by his intellect. By the way, it is not for nothing that he is a Master of Arts! . . . No, not for nothing! But wait a little, Ivan Karlych, you'll see what he'll be in ten years! He'll be quite unapproachable!"

But here the real Egor Semenych, checking himself, made a serious face, caught hold of his head and shouted:

"Devils! They've dirtied, destroyed, devastated everything! The garden is lost! The garden is ruined!"

Kovrin worked with the same zeal as before, and did not notice the hurly-burly around him. Love only added oil to the fire. After each meeting with Tania he returned to his room happy, enraptured, and with the same passion with which he had just kissed Tania and had told her of his love, he seized a book or set to work at his manuscript. All that the black monk had said about the chosen of God, eternal truth, the brilliant future of the human race, etc., only gave his work a special, an uncommon meaning and filled his soul with pride, and the consciousness of his own eminence. Once or twice a week either in the park or in the house he met the black monk and conversed with him for a long time; but this did not frighten him; on the contrary, it delighted him, as he was firmly convinced that such an apparition only visited the chosen, the eminent people, who had devoted themselves to the service of the idea.

One day the monk appeared during dinner and sat down in the dining-room near the window. Kovrin was delighted, and he very adroitly turned the conversation with Egor Semenych and Tania upon subjects that might interest the monk. The black guest listened and nodded his head affably; Egor Semenych and Tania also listened and smiled gaily, never suspecting that Kovrin was not talking to them, but to his vision.

Unperceived the fast of the Assumption was there, and soon after it the wedding-day arrived. The marriage was celebrated according to Egor Semenych's persistent desire "with racket," that is, with senseless festivities that lasted two days. They ate and drank far more than three thousand roubles, but owing to the bad hired band, the shrill toasts, the hurrying to and fro of the lackeys, the noise and the overcrowding, nobody could appreciate the bouquet of the expensive wines nor the taste of the wonderful delicacies that had been ordered from Moscow.

CHAPTER VII

DON'T BE AFRAID!

It happened on one of the long winter nights that Kovrin was lying in bed reading a French novel. Poor little Tania, who was not yet accustomed to live in a town, had a bad headache, as she often had by the evening, and was long since asleep, but from time to time she was uttering disconnected phrases in her sleep.

It had struck three. Kovrin blew out his candle and lay down. He lay long with closed eyes, but could not get to sleep, because (so it seemed to him) it was very hot in the bedroom and Tania was talking in her sleep. At half-pas four he again lit the candle, and at tha moment he saw the black monk sittin on the arm-chair that stood near the bed

"How do you do?" the monk said, an after a short pause he asked: "Of wha are you thinking now?"

"Of fame," Kovrin answered. "In th French novel I have just been readin there is a man, a young scientist wh did stupid things, and who pined awa from longing for fame. These longing are incomprehensible to me."

"Because you are wise. You loo upon fame with indifference, like a play thing that does not interest you."

"Yes, that is true."

"Fame has no attraction for you What is there flattering, interesting or in structive in the fact that your name wi be carved on your gravestone, and the time will efface this inscription togethe with its gilding? Besides, happily yo are too many for man's weak memory t be able to remember all your names."

"Naturally," Kovrin agreed. "Wh should they be remembered? But le us speak of something else. For ex ample, of happiness. What is happ ness?"

When the clock struck five he wa sitting on his bed with his feet restin on the rug and turning to the monk h was saying:

"In ancient times one happy ma was at last frightened at his own happ ness—it was so great! And in order t propitiate the gods he sacrificed to the his most precious ring. You know tha story? Like Polycrates, I am beginnin to be alarmed at my own happiness. I appears to me strange that from mornin to night I only experience joy; I a filled with joy and it smothers all othe

feelings. I do not know what sadness, grief or dullness is. Here am I not asleep. I suffer from sleeplessness, but I am not dull. Quite seriously, I'm beginning to be perplexed."

"Why?" the monk asked in astonishment. "Is joy a superhuman feeling? Ought it not to be the normal condition of man? The higher a man is in his intellectual and moral development, the more free he is, the greater are the pleasures that life offers him. Socrates, Diogenes and Marcus Aurelius knew joy, and not grief. The apostle says: 'Rejoice always.' Therefore rejoice and be happy."

"What if suddenly the gods were angered?" Kovrin said jokingly, and he laughed. "What if they take from me my comfort and make me suffer cold and hunger, it will scarcely be to my taste."

In the meantime Tania had awaked and looked at her husband with amazement and terror. He was talking, addressing himself to the arm-chair, gesticulating and laughing; his eyes glistened and there was something strange in his laughter.

"Andryusha, with whom are you talking?" she asked, catching hold of the hand he was stretching out to the monk. "Andryusha, with whom? . . ."

"Eh? With whom?" Kovrin became confused. "With him. There he sits," he answered, pointing to the black monk.

"There's nobody here . . . nobody! Andryusha, you're ill!"

Tania put her arms round her husband and pressed close to him, and as if to protect him from visions she put her hand over his eyes. "You are ill!" She sobbed and her whole body trembled. "Forgive me, darling, my dear one; I have long noticed that your soul is troubled about something. You are mentally ill, Andryusha. . . ."

Her shivering fit was communicated to him. He looked again at the arm-chair, which was now empty; he suddenly felt a weakness in the arms and legs, he was alarmed and began to dress.

"It's nothing, Tania, nothing . . ." he mumbled, shivering. "I really feel a little out of sorts . . . it's time to admit it."

"I have long noticed it—and papa has noticed it too," she said, trying to restrain her sobs. "You talk to yourself, you smile in a strange way . . . you don't sleep. Oh, my God, my God, save us!" she said in terror. "But you must not be afraid, Andryusha, don't be afraid, for God's sake, don't be afraid. . . ."

She also began to dress. Only now, when he looked at her, Kovrin understood all the danger of his position, he understood what the black monk and his talks with him meant. It was now quite clear to him that he was a madman.

They both dressed, without knowing why, and went into the drawing-room. She went first, he followed her. Here Egor Semenych, who was staying with them, was already standing in his dressing-gown with a candle in his hand.

"Don't be afraid, Andryusha," Tania said again, trembling like one with a fever. "Don't be afraid. Papa, it will soon pass, it will soon pass."

Kovrin was too excited to be able to speak. He wanted to say to his father-in-law in a playful tone:

"Congratulate me, I think I'm out of my mind," but his lips only moved, and he smiled bitterly.

At nine o'clock in the morning he was wrapped up in a fur coat and a shawl and driven in a carriage to the doctor's. He began a cure.

CHAPTER VIII

TORTURE

SUMMER had come back again, and the doctor ordered Kovrin to go to the country. Kovrin was already cured, he had ceased seeing the black monk, and it only was necessary to restore his physical strength. While living on his father-in-law's estate he drank much milk, he worked only two hours a day, he did not drink wine, nor did he smoke.

On the eve of St. Elias's day vespers were celebrated in the house. When the deacon handed the censer to the priest there was an odour of the churchyard in the whole of the huge old hall, and it made Kovrin feel dull. He went into the garden. He walked about there without noticing the magnificent flowers; he sat on one of the benches and then wandered into the park; when he came to the river he went down to the water's edge and stood there for some time plunged in thought looking at the water. The gloomy pines, with their rough roots that but a year ago had seen him so young, joyful and hale, now did not whisper together, but stood motionless and dumb, just as if they did not recognize him. And, really, he was changed since last year; his head was closely cropped, his long beautiful hair was gone, his gait was languid, his face had grown stouter and paler.

He crossed over the foot-bridge to the other bank. Where the year before there had been rye, now mowed-down oats lay in long rows. The sun had already disappeared, and on the horizon the red glow of sunset was still widespread, foretelling wind for the next day. It was quiet. Looking in the direction where a year before the black monk had made his first appearance, Kovrin stood for about twenty minutes till the brightness of the sunset had faded away.

When he returned to the house languid and dissatisfied, vespers were over. Egor Semenych and Tania were sitting on the steps of the terrace drinking tea. They were talking about something, but when they saw Kovrin coming they suddenly were silent, and he concluded, judging by their faces, that the conversation had been about him.

"I think it's time for you to have your milk," Tania said to her husband.

"No, it's not time . . ." he answered as he sat down on the very lowest step. "Drink it yourself. I don't want it."

Tania exchanged an anxious glance with her father and said in a guilty tone:

"You yourself have noticed that milk does you good."

"Oh yes, very much good," Kovrin said, smiling. "I congratulate you; since Friday I have added another pound to my weight." He squeezed his head tightly between his hands and said sadly: "Why, why do you make me have this cure? All sorts of bromatic preparations, idleness, warm baths, watching, poor-spirited, alarm for every mouthful, for every step—all this in the end will make a perfect idiot of me. I went mad, I had the mania of greatness, but for all that I was gay, healthy and even happy; I was interesting and original. Now I have become more sober-minded and matter-of-fact, but in

consequence I am now like everybody else. I am mediocre, life is tiresome to me. . . . Oh, how cruelly you have acted towards me! I saw hallucinations; in what way did that interfere with anybody? I ask you, with whom did that interfere?"

"God knows what you are saying!" Egor Semenych said with a sigh. "It's tiresome to listen to you!"

"Then don't listen."

The presence of people, especially of Egor Semenych, irritated Kovrin. He answered him drily, coldly, even rudely, and when he looked at him it was always with derision and with hatred. Egor Semenych was confused and coughed guiltily, although he could feel no blame. Unable to understand this sudden and sharp change in their friendly and kind-hearted relations, Tania pressed close to her father, and looked into his eyes with troubled glances; she wanted to understand the cause, but could not; all that was clear to her was that their relations became with every day worse and worse, that latterly her father had aged very much, and that her husband had become irritable, capricious, quarrelsome and uninteresting. She could no longer laugh and sing, she ate nothing at dinner, she often had sleepless nights, expecting something dreadful, and she was so worn out that once she lay in a faint from dinner-time until evening. During vespers it had appeared to her that her father was crying, and now when they were all three sitting together on the terrace she had to make an effort not to think of this.

"How happy were Buddha, Mohammed and Shakespeare, that their kind relations and doctors did not try to cure them of their ecstasies and inspirations!" Kovrin said. "If Mohammed had taken bromide to calm his nerves, had worked only two hours a day and had drunk milk, as little would have remained of this remarkable man as of his dog. The doctors and the kind relations will in the end so blunt the capacities of mankind that at last mediocrity will be considered genius and civilization will perish. If you only knew how thankful I am to you!" Kovrin said with vexation.

He felt greatly irritated and to prevent himself from saying too much he rose quickly and went into the house. The night was calm, and the scent of tobacco and jalap was borne through the open window. In the large dark ballroom the moonlight lay in green patches on the floor and on the piano. Kovrin remembered his raptures of the previous summer, when the jalaps smelt in the same way and the moon looked in at the windows. In order to renew last year's frame of mind he hurried into his study, lit a strong cigar and ordered the butler to bring him some wine. But the cigar only left an unpleasantly bitter taste in his mouth, and the wine had not the same flavour it had had the year before. What loss of habit does! He got giddy from the cigar, and after two sips of wine he had palpitations of the heart, so he had to take a dose of bromide.

When she was going to bed Tania said to him:

"My father adores you. You are angry with him for some reason and it is killing him. Only look at him: he is ageing not by days, but by hours. I implore you, Andryusha, for God's sake, for the sake of your late father, for the

sake of my peace, be more affectionate with him."

"I can't, and I won't."

"But why?" Tania asked, beginning to tremble all over. "Tell me why?"

"Because I don't like him, that's all," Kovrin said carelessly, and shrugged his shoulders; "but let us not talk of him, he is your father."

"I can't, I really can't understand," Tania said, pressing her hands to her temples and looking at a point in front of her. "Something incomprehensible, something terrible is happening in our house. You are changed, you are not like yourself. You are clever, you are no ordinary man and you get irritated with trifles; you meddle in all sort of tittle-tattle. Such trifles agitate you, that sometimes one is astonished and cannot believe it, and asks oneself: Is it you? Well, well, don't be angry, don't be angry," she continued, alarmed by her own words and kissing his hands. "You are clever, kind, noble. You will be towards with my father. He is so good."

"He's not good, but good-natured. The good-natured uncles in farces, who are somewhat like your father—well-fed and with good-natured faces, extremely hospitable and a little comical—appeared touching and amusing to me in novels and farces and also in real life at one time—now they are repugnant to me. They are all egoists to the marrow of their bones. What's most repugnant to me is their being overfed and their abdominal, their entirely oxlike or swinelike optimism."

Tania sat down on the bed and laid her head on the pillow.

"This is torture," she said, and her voice showed she was quite exhausted, and that it was difficult for her to speak. "Ever since the winter there has not been a single quiet moment. Good God, it is terrible! I suffer . . ."

"Yes, of course, I am Herod, and you and your little papa are the Egyptian infants. Oh, of course!"

His face appeared to Tania to be ugly and disagreeable; hatred and an expression of derision did not become him. For some time she had noticed there was something wanting in his face; it was as if a change had taken place in his countenance ever since the time his hair had been cut. She wanted to say something insulting to him, but at the moment she caught herself having such inimical feelings that she became alarmed and left the bedroom.

CHAPTER IX

BLOOD OF KOVRIN

KOVRIN was appointed to a professor's chair. His inaugural address was announced for the second of December, and the notice of this lecture was hung up in the corridor of the University. But on the appointed day he sent a telegram to inform the provost that owing to illness he was unable to give the lecture.

He had had a severe hæmorrhage from the throat. For some time he had spat blood, but about twice a month the hæmorrhage was considerable, and after these attacks he experienced great weakness and feel into a somnolent condition. This illness did not cause him any special anxiety, as he knew that his mother had lived for ten years and even longer with exactly the same malady, and the doctors assured him that there was no danger; they advised him only

o be calm, to live a regular life and to talk as little as possible.

In January he was again unable to give the lecture owing to the same cause, and in February it was already too late to begin the course, and it had to be postponed until the next year.

At that time he no longer lived with Tania, but with another woman, who was two years older than he was, and who looked after him as if he were a child. His frame of mind was peaceful and tranquil: he obeyed willingly, and when Varvara Nikolaevna decided to take him to the Crimea he consented, although he had a foreboding that nothing good would come of this journey.

They arrived in Sevastopol towards evening and stayed the night at an hotel to rest before proceeding the next day to Yalta. They were both exhausted from the long journey. Varvara Nikolaevna had some tea, went to bed and was soon sound asleep. But Kovrin remained up. An hour before leaving home he had received a letter from Tania, and he had not been able to make up his mind to open it; it was still lying in his side pocket, and the thought of its being there agitated him unpleasantly. In the depths of his soul he now quite sincerely considered his marriage to have been a mistake; he was glad that he had definitely separated from her, and the remembrance of that woman, who at last had turned into a live walking skeleton and in whom all appeared to be dead with the exception of the large clever eyes that looked steadily at you—aroused in him nothing but pity and sorrow for himself, and the handwriting on the envelope reminded him how unjust and cruel he had been two years ago, how he had vented his own voidness of soul, dullness, solitude and dissatisfaction with life on quite innocent people. This also reminded him of how one day he had torn into small pieces his dissertation and all the articles he had written during his illness and how he had thrown them out of the window, and the scraps of paper, blown about by the wind, had fluttered on to the flowers and the trees: in each line he saw strange pretensions that were founded on nothing, harebrained passions, insolence, the mania of greatness, and this had produced on him the effect of reading a description of his own vices; but when the last copy-book had been torn up and had flown out of the window for some reason he had suddenly become sorry and embittered, and he had gone to his wife and had told her all sorts of unpleasant things. Good God, how he had pestered her! One day wanting to cause her pain he had told her that her father had played an uneviable part in their romance as he had asked him to marry her. Egor Semenych, who had accidentally overheard this, rushed into the room and in his despair was unable to utter a word; he only stood there shifting from one foot to another and uttering a strange lowing sound as if he had been deprived of the power of speech, and Tania, gazing at her father, gave a piercing shriek and fell down in a swoon. It was disgraceful!

All this recurred to his memory at the sight of the familiar handwriting. Kovrin went out on to the balcony; it was a calm warm evening, and there was a scent of the sea. The moon and lights were reflected in the beautiful bay, which was of a colour for which it was difficult to find a name. It was

a delicate and soft blending of blue and green; in places the water assumed the colour of green copperas, and in other places it seemed as if the moonlight had solidified, and instead of water had filled the bay, and in general what harmony of colour there was all around, what a peaceful, calm and lofty enjoyment!

In the floor below, just under the balcony, the window was probably open, because one could distinctly hear women's voices and laughter. It was evident an evening party was going on there.

Kovrin made an effort, unsealed the letter and reentering his room he read:

"My father has just died. I owe this to you as you have killed him. Our garden is ruined; strangers are now masters there; that is to say, what my poor father so feared is happening. I owe this to you too. I hate you with my whole soul, and I hope you will soon perish. Oh, how I suffer. My soul is consumed by unbearable pain. May you be accursed. I mistook you for an extraordinary man, for a genius. I loved you, but you proved to be a madman. . . ."

Kovrin could read no farther, he tore up the letter and threw it away. He was overpowered by a feeling of uneasiness that was almost like fear. Varvara Nikolaevna was sleeping behind the screen, and he could hear her breathing; from the story below the sound of women's voices and laughter were borne to him, but he had a sort of feeling that in the whole of the hotel there was not a living soul besides himself. Because unhappy, sorrowing Tania had cursed him in her letter, and had wished him to perish, a feeling of dread came over him, and he looked furtively at the door as if he feared that the unknown power, which in the space of some two years had caused such ruin in his life and in the lives of those dearest to him, would enter the room and again take possession of him.

By experience he knew that when his nerves were unstrung the best remedy was work. He must sit down to the table and force himself to concentrate his mind on some special subject. He took out of his portfolio a copy-book in which he had jotted down the synopsis of a small compilatory work he had thought of writing if the weather proved to be bad in the Crimea, as it was dull to be without occupation. He sat down to the table and began to work at this synopsis, and it appeared to him that his old peaceful, submissive, equitable frame of mind was coming back. The copy-book with the synopsis aroused in him thoughts of wordly vanities. He thought how much life takes for the insignificant or very ordinary blessings that it is able to give man in exchange. For example, in order to receive before forty an ordinary professorial chair, and to expound in a languid, tiresome, heavy style very ordinary thoughts, which besides are the thoughts of other people—in a word, to attain the position of a moderately good scholar, he, Kovrin, had to study for fifteen years, to work day and night, pass through a serious mental disease, to survive an unsuccessful marriage and commit all sorts of follies and injustices, which it would be pleasant to forget. Kovrin realized now quite plainly that he was an ordinary mediocrity and he was quite satisfied with this, as he considered every man must be contented with what he was.

His synopsis would have been able to calm him if the white scraps of the torn-up letter that lay on the floor had not prevented him from concentrating his thoughts. He rose from the table, collected the fragments of the letter and threw them out of the window; but a light wind was blowing from the sea and the scraps of paper were scattered on the window-sill. He again was seized by a feeling of uneasiness that was almost like fear, and it seemed to him that in the whole of the hotel with the exception of himself there was not a single living soul. . . . He went on to the balcony. The bay, as if alive, looked at him with numberless azure, dark blue, turquoise-blue and fiery eyes and enticed him towards itself. It was really hot and sultry, and it would be pleasant to have a bath.

Suddenly in the lower story just under the balcony there was the sound of a violin and two delicate women's voices began to sing. They were singing something very familiar. The song that was being sung below told of a girl who had a sick imagination, who heard mysterious sounds at night in the garden, and made up her mind that they were sacred harmonies that were incomprehensible to us mortals. . . . Kovrin had catchings of his breath and his heart grew heavy with sadness, and a beautiful sweet joy, such as he had long forgotten, throbbed in his breast.

A high black column that looked like a whirlwind or a waterspout appeared on the opposite shores of the bay. With terrible rapidity it moved across the bay in the direction of the hotel, becoming smaller and darker, and Kovrin had scarcely time to stand to one side to make room for it. . . . A monk with a bare head and black eyebrows, barefooted, with hands crossed on his breast, was borne past him and stopped in the middle of the room.

"Why did you not believe me?" he asked reproachfully, and looked kindly at Kovrin. "If you had believed me then, when I told you that you were a genius, you would not have passed these two years so sadly and so miserably."

Kovrin believed that he was the chosen of God and a genius, he instantly remembered all his former conversations with the black monk, and he wanted to speak but blood began to flow from his throat straight on to his breast, and he, not knowing what to do, passed his hands over his chest and his cuffs became saturated with blood. He wanted to call Varvara Nikolaevna, who was sleeping behind the screen; he made an effort and said:

"Tania!"

He fell on the floor and raising himself on his arm again called:

"Tania!"

He called to Tania, he called to the great gardens with their lovely flowers sprinkled with dew, he called to the park to the pines with their rugged roots, to the fields of rye, to his wonderful science, to his youth, courage, joy, he called to life that was so beautiful. He saw on the floor close to his face a large pool of blood, and from weakness he could not utter another word, but an inexpressible, a boundless happiness filled his whole being. Below, just under the balcony, they were playing the serenade, and the black monk whispered to him that he was a genius and that

he was only dying because his weak human body had lost its balance and could no longer serve as the garb for a genius.

When Varvara Nikolaevna awoke and came from behind the screen Kovrin was already dead and his face had stiffened in a blissful smile.

A Family Council

To keep the family skeleton of the Uskoffs off the street, the most rigorous measures were taken. Half of the servants were sent to the theatre and circus, and half stayed in the kitchen. Orders were given to admit no one. The wife of the culprit's uncle, her sister, and the governess, although aware of the mystery, pretended that they knew nothing about it. They sat silently in the dining-room, and never left it.

Sasha Uskoff, aged twenty-five, the cause of all this consternation, arrived some time ago; and on the advice of kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch, his maternal uncle, sat in the corridor outside the study and prepared to confess all and openly.

On the other side of the door the family council was being held. The discussion ran on a ticklish and very disagreeable subject. The facts of the matter were as follows. Sasha Uskoff had discounted at a bankers a forged bill of exchange, the term of which expired three days before; and now his two paternal uncles, and Ivan Markovitch, an uncle on his mother's side, were discussing the solemn problem: should the money be paid and the family honour saved, or should they wash their hands of the whole matter, and leave the law to take its course?

To people unconcerned and uninterested such questions seem very trivial, but for those with whom the solution lies they are extraordinarily complex. The three uncles had already had their say, yet the matter had not advanced a step.

"Heavens!" cried the Colonel, a paternal uncle, in a voice betraying both weariness and irritation. "Heavens! who said that family honour was a prejudice? I never said anything of the kind. I only wanted to save you from looking at the matter from a false standpoint—to point out how easily you may make an irremediable mistake. Yet you don't seem to understand me! I suppose I am speaking Russian, not Chinese!"

"My dear fellow, we understand you perfectly," interposed Ivan Markovitch soothingly.

"Then why do you say that I deny family honour? I repeat what I have said! Fam—ily hon—our false—ly under—stood is a pre—ju—dice! Falsely under—stood, mind you! That is my point of view. From any conviction whatever, to screen and leave unpunished a rascal, no matter who he is, both contrary to law and unworthy of an honourable man. It is not the saving of the family honour, but civic cowardice. Take the Army, for example! The honour of the Army is dearer to a soldier than any other honour. But

we do not screen our guilty members . . . we judge them! Do you imagine that the honour of the Army suffers thereby? On the contrary!"

The other paternal uncle, an official of the Crown Council, a rheumatic, taciturn, and not very intelligent man, held his peace all the time, or spoke only of the fact that if the matter came into court the name of the Uskoffs would appear in the newspapers; in his opinion, therefore, to avoid publicity it would be better to hush up the matter while there was still time. But with the exception of this reference to the newspapers, he gave no reason for his opinion.

But kind-hearted Ivan Markovitch, the maternal uncle, spoke fluently and softly with a tremula in his voice. He began with the argument that youth has its claims and its peculiar temptations. Which of us was not once young, and which of us did not sometimes go a step too far? Even leaving aside ordinary mortals, did not history teach that the greatest minds in youth were not always able to avoid infatuations and mistakes. Take for instance the biographies of great writers. What one of them did not gamble and drink, and draw upon himself the condemnation of all right-minded men? While on the one hand we remembered that Sasha's errors had overstepped the boundary into crime, on the other we must take into account that Sasha hardly received any education; he was expelled from the gymnasium when in the fifth form; he lost his parents in early childhood, and thus at the most susceptible age was deprived of control and all beneficent influences. He was a nervous boy, easily excited, without any naturally strong moral convictions, and he had been spoiled by happiness. Even if he were guilty, still he deserved the sympathy and concern of all sympathetic souls. Punished, of course, he must be; but then, had he not already been punished by his conscience, and the tortures which he must now be feeling as he awaited the decision of his relatives. The comparison with the Army which the Colonel had made was very flattering, and did great honour to his generous mind; the appeal to social feelings showed the nobility of his heart. But it must not be forgotten that the member of society in every individual was closely bound up with the Christian.

"And how should we violate our social duty," asked Ivan Markovitch, "if instead of punishing a guilty boy we stretch out to him the hand of mercy?"

Then Ivan Markovitch reverted to the question of the family honour. He himself had not the honour to belong to the distinguished family of Uskoff, but he knew very well that that illustrious race dated its origin from the thirteenth century, and he could not forget for a moment that his beloved, unforgotten sister was the wife of a scion of the race. In one word—the Uskoff family was dear to him for many reasons, and he could not for a moment entertain the thought that for a paltry fifteen hundred roubles a shadow should be cast for ever upon the ancestral tree. And if all the argument already adduced were insufficiently convincing then he, in conclusion, asked his brothers-in-law to explain the problem: What is a crime? A crime was an immoral action, having its impulse in an evil will. So most people thought. But could we affirm that the human will was free to decide? To this

important question science could give no conclusive answer. Metaphysicians maintained various divergent theories. For instance, the new school of Lombroso refused to recognize free-will, and held that every crime was the product of purely anatomical peculiarities in the individual.

"Ivan Markovitch!" interrupted the Colonel imploringly. "Do, for Heaven's sake, talk sense. We are speaking seriously about a serious matter . . . and you, about Lombroso! You are a clever man, but think for a moment—how can all this rattle-box rhetoric help us to decide the question?"

Sasha Uskoff sat outside the door and listened. He felt neither fear nor shame nor tedium—only weariness and spiritual vacuity. He felt that it did not matter a kopeck whether he was forgiven or not; he had come here to await his sentence and to offer a frank explanation, only because he was begged to do so by kindly Ivan Markovitch. He was not afraid of the future. It was all the same to him, here in the corridor, in prison, or in Siberia.

"Sibera is only Sibera—the devil take it!"

Life has wearied Sasha, and has become insufferably tedious. He is inextricably in debt, he has not a kopeck in his pocket, his relatives have become odious to him; with his friends and with women he must part sooner or later, for they are already beginning to look at him contemptuously as a parasite. The future is dark.

Sasha, in fact, is indifferent, and only one thing affects him. That is, that through the door he can hear himself being spoken of as a scoundrel and a criminal. All the time he is itching to jump up, burst into the room, and, in answer to the destestable metallic voice of the Colonel, to cry:

"You are a liar!"

A criminal—it is a horrid word. It is applied as a rule to murderers, thieves, robbers, and people incorrigibly wicked and morally hopeless. But Sasha is far from this. . . . True, he is up to his neck in debts, and never attempts to pay them. But then indebtedness is not a crime, and there are very few men who are not in debt. The Colonel and Ivan Markovitch are both in debt.

"What on earth am I guilty of?" asked Sasha.

He had obtained money by presenting a forged bill. But this was done by every young man he knew. Khandrikoff and Von Burst, for instance, whenever they wanted money, discounted bills with forged acceptances of their parents and friends, and when their own money came in met them. Sasha did exactly the same thing, and only failed to meet his bill owing to Khandrikoff's failure to lend the money which he had promised. It was not he, but circumstance which was at fault. . . . It was true that imitating another man's signature was considered wrong, but that did not make it a crime but merely an ugly formality, a manœuvre constantly adopted which injured nobody; and Sasha when he forged the Colonel's name had no intention of causing loss to anyone.

"It is absurd to pretend that I have been guilty of a crime," thought Sasha. "I have not the character of men who commit crimes. On the contrary, I am easy-going and sensitive . . . when I have money I help the poor. . . ."

While Sasha reasoned thus, the dis-

cussion continued on the other side of the door.

"But, gentlemen, this is only the beginning!" cried the Colonel. "Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we let him off and pay the money! He will go on still in the same way and continue to lead his unprincipled life. He will indulge in dissipation, run into debt, go to our tailors and order clothes in our names. What guarantee have we that this scandal will be the last? As far as I am concerned, I tell you frankly that I do not believe in his reformation for one moment."

The official of the Crown Council muttered something in reply. Then Ivan Markovitch began to speak softly and fluently. The Colonel impatiently shifted his chair, and smothered Ivan Markovitch's argument with his detestable, metallic voice. At last the door opened, and out of the study came Ivan Markovitch with red spots on his meagre, clean-shaven face.

"Come!" he said, taking Sasha by the arm. "Come in and make an open-hearted confession. Without pride, like a good boy . . . humbly and from the heart."

Sasha went into the study. The official of the Crown Council continued to sit, but the Colonel, hands in pockets, and with one knee resting on his chair, stood before the table. The room was full of smoke and stiflingly hot. Sasha did not look at either the Colonel or his brother, but suddenly feeling ashamed and hurt, glanced anxiously at Ivan Markovitch and muttered:

"I will pay . . . I will give . . ."

"May I ask you on what you relied when you obtained the money on this bill?" rang out the metallic voice.

"I . . . Khandrikoff promised to lend me the money in time."

Sasha said nothing more. He went out of the study and again sat on the chair outside the door. He would have gone away at once had he not been stifled with hatred and with a desire to tear the Colonel to pieces or at least to insult him to his face. But at this moment in the dim twilight around the dining-room appeared a woman's figure. It was the Colonel's wife. She beckoned Sasha, and, wringing her hands, said with tears in her voice:

"*Alexandre,* I know that you do not love me, but . . . listen for a moment! My poor boy, how can this have happened? It is awful, awful! For Heaven's sake beg their forgiveness . . . justify yourself, implore them!"

Sasha looked at her twitching shoulders, and at the big tears which flowed down her cheeks; he heard behind him the dull, nervous voices of his exhausted uncles, and shrugged his shoulders. He had never expected that his aristocratic relatives would raise such a storm over a paltry fifteen hundred roubles. And he could understand neither the tears nor the trembling voices.

An hour later he heard indications that the Colonel was gaining the day. The other uncles were being won over to his determination to leave the matter to the law.

"It is decided!" said the Colonel stiffly. "*Basta!*"

But having decided thus, the three uncles, even the inexorable Colonel, perceptibly lost heart.

"Heavens!" sighed Ivan Markovitch. "My poor sister!"

And he began in a soft voice to

announce his conviction that his sister, Sasha's mother, was invisibly present in the room. He felt in his heart that this unhappy, sainted woman was weeping, anguishing, interceding for her boy. For the sake of her repose in the other world it would have been better to spare Sasha.

Sasha heard someone whimpering. It was Ivan Markovitch. He wept and muttered something inaudible through the door. The Colonel rose and walked from corner to corner. The discussion began anew. . . .

The clock in the drawing-room struck two. The council was over at last. The Colonel, to avoid meeting a man who had caused him so much shame, left the room through the antechamber. Ivan Markovitch came into the corridor. He was plainly agitated, but rubbed his hands cheerfully. His tear-stained eyes glanced happily around him, and his mouth was twisted into a smile.

"It is all right, my boy!" he said to Sasha. "Heaven be praised! You may go home, child, and sleep quietly. We have decided to pay the money, but only on the condition that you repent sincerely, and agree to come with me to the country to-morrow, and set to work."

A minute afterwards, Ivan Markovitch and Sasha, having put on their overcoats and hats, went down-stairs together. Uncle Ivan muttered something edifying. But Sasha didn't listen; he felt only that something heavy and painful had fallen from his shoulders. He was forgiven—he was free! Joy like a breeze burst into his breast and wrapped his heart with refreshing coolness. He wished to breathe, to move, to live. And looking at the street lamps and at the black sky he remembered that to-day at "The Bear," Von Burst would celebrate his name-day. A new joy seized his soul.

"I will go!" he decided.

But suddenly he remembered that he had not a kopeck, and that his friends already despised him for his penuriousness. He must get money at all cost.

"Uncle, lend me a hundred roubles!" he said to Ivan Markovitch.

Ivan Markovitch looked at him in amazement, and staggered back against a lamp-post."

"Lend me a hundred roubles!" cried Sasha, impatiently shifting from foot to foot, and beginning to lose his temper. "Uncle, I beg of you . . . lend me a hundred roubles!"

His face trembled with excitement, and he nearly rushed at his uncle.

"You won't give them?" he cried, seeing that his uncle was too dumfounded to understand. "Listen, if you refuse to lend them, I'll inform on myself to-morrow. I'll refuse to let you pay the money. I'll forge another to-morrow!"

Thunderstruck, terror-stricken, Ivan Markovitch muttered something incoherent, took from his pocket a hundred-rouble note, and handed it silently to Sasha. And Sasha took it and hurriedly walked away.

And sitting in a droschky, Sasha grew cool again, and felt his heart expand with renewed joy. The claims of youth of which kind-hearted uncle Ivan had spoken at the council-table had inspired and taken possession of him again. He painted in imagination the coming feast, and in his mind, among visions of bottles, women, and boon companions, twinkled a little thought:

"Now I begin to see that I was in the wrong."

Woe

Grigori Petroff, long reputed the cleverest turner and most shiftless muzhik in all Galtchink canton, drove to Zemstvo hospital with his old spouse. It was a good thirty versts, on a road too bad for a driver of experience, much more for lazy Grigori. In the turner's face beat a sharp, icy wind, and it was hard to say whether the snow came from heaven or from earth. Fields, telegraph posts, trees and even the horses were scarcely seen. The mare was worn out and dragged its hoofs out of the deep snow, shaking its head. The turner was in a hurry, and whipped her up.

"Don't cry, Matrena!" he stammered. "Bear it a little longer! We'll soon, God grant, be at the hospital, and then you'll . . . . Pavl Ivanuitch'll give you a powder, or let your blood; perhaps he'll rub some sort of spirit into you. Pavl Ivanuitch will do his best. . . . He'll shout, and stamp his feet, but he'll do his best. . . . He's a first-rate doctor, he knows his business, may God be good to him! . . . The minute we arrive he'll run out of his lodgings and look at you. 'What!' he'll shout at me. 'Why didn't you come before? Do you think I am a dog to waste all day with you devils? Why didn't you come in the morning? Begone! Come back to-morrow!' And I will answer, 'Mister doctor! Pavl Ivanuitch! Your honour! . . .'"

The turner whipped his horse, and without looking at his old woman, continued to mutter—

"'Your honour! Truly before God! . . . on my oath, I started at daybreak. . . How could I get here sooner when God . . . the Mother of God was angry and sent such a storm? You can see for yourself! Even with a good horse I couldn't get here in time, and, as you can see for yourself, mine is not a horse, but a disgrace!' And Pavl Inanuitch will frown and shout, 'I know you! Always the same excuse! You, in particular, Grisha! I've known you for years. You stopped five times at a drink-shop!' And I shall answer him, 'Your honour! Don't think me a ruffian! My old woman is giving her soul to God; she's dying! Do you think I'd go near a drink-shop? May they be cursed, these drink-shops!' Then Pavl Ivanuitch will tell them to take you into the hospital. And I shall bow to the ground. 'Pavl Ivanuitch! Your honour! I thank you humbly! Forgive us fools, anathemas; don't condemn us, poor muzhiks! You ought to kick us out of the hall! Yet you come out to meet us, and wet your legs in the snow!'

"And Pavl Ivanuitch will look as if he wanted to hit me, and say, 'Don't throw yourself at my feet, fool! You'd do better to drink less vodka and have pity on your wife. You ought to be flogged!' 'That's God's truth, Pavl Ivanuitch, may I be flogged; may God flog me! But why not throw myself at your feet? You are our benefactor, our own father! Your honour! It is the truth, before God; spit in my face if I lie: as soon as my Matrena, this same Matrena, gets well, I will make anything your honour wants. A cigar-case, if you wish it, of yellow birch . . .

a set of croquet balls, nine-pins—I can make them like the best foreign ones. . . . I will make them all for you. I won't charge a kopeck. In Moscow such cigar-cases cost four roubles. I won't take a kopeck.' And the doctor will laugh and say to me, 'Well, well . . . agreed! I'm sorry for you. Only it's a pity you're such a drunkard!' I know how to manage with these gentlemen! There's no man on earth I can't stand up to. Only may God keep us from losing the road! *Akh,* my eyes are full of snow."

And the turner muttered without cease. As if to dull the pain of his own feelings, he babbled on mechanically. But many as the words on his lips, there were still more thoughts and problems in his head. Woe had come upon the turner suddenly, unexpectedly; and now he could not recover his self-possession. Till now he had lived peacefully in drunken apathy, insensible to sorrow and to joy; and now he had been struck an intolerable blow. The shiftless, drunken lie-abed suddenly found himself busy, tormented, and, it seemed, in conflict with Nature herself.

The turner remembered that his sorrows began only yesterday. When, drunk as usual, he had returned to his home the night before, and, by virtue of old custom, abused his wife and shook his fists at her, the old woman looked at him as she had never looked before. Formerly her old eyes expressed martyrdom, and the affection of a much-beaten, badly-fed dog; this night she looked at him morosely, steadfastly, as only saints and dying women look. With these unaccustomed eyes, all the trouble began. The frightened turner borrowed a neighbour's horse, and was driving the old woman to hospital in the hope that Pavl Ivanuitch with powders and ointments would restore to his wife her old expression.

"And listen, Matrena," he stammered. "If Pavl Ivanuitch asks do I ever beat you, say no, never! For I will never beat you again! I swear it. I never did beat you out of anger. I beat you only casually! I am sorry for you now. Another man would pay no attention to you, but I take you to hospital. . . . I do my best. But the storm, the storm, Lord God, Thy will! May God keep us from losing the road! Does your side hurt? Matrena, why don't you answer? I ask, does your side hurt?

"Why is it the snow doesn't melt on her face?" he asked himself, feeling a cold wind on his back and frozen legs. "My snow thaws, but hers. . . . It's strange!"

He could not understand why the snow on his wife's face did not thaw, why her face was drawn-out, severe, and serious, and had turned the colour of dirty wax.

"You are a fool!" muttered the turner. "I spoke to you from my conscience, before God!. . . . and you haven't the manners to answer. . . . Fool! If you're not more careful, I won't take you to Pavl Ivanuitch!"

The turner dropped the reins, and thought. He could not make up his mind to look at his wife. He was nervous; and soon his wife's unmannerly silence frightened him. At last, to end his uncertainty, without looking at his wife he felt her icy hand. The unlifted hand fell, as a whip.

"She's dead, I suppose. An adventure!"

And the turner wept. He wept less from grief than vexation. He reflected how quickly everything happens in this world; how he had hardly entered into his woe ere the woe was past. He hardly seemed to have had time to live with his wife, speak to her, feel for her, and now she was dead. True, they had lived together forty years, but the forty years had fled away like a mist. What with drink, poverty, and quarrels, life had passed away unlived. And, what was bitterest of all, the old woman died at a moment when he felt that he pitied her, could not live without her, and was guilty before her.

"And she even went out and begged," he remembered. "I sent her myself to beg bread. An adventure! She ought to have lived another ten years. She thought, I suppose, that I'm really a bad lot. Mother in heaven, where am I driving to? It's no more a case of cure, but of funerals. Turn back."

The turned turned back and flogged his horse with all his might. The road grew worse and worse. He could no longer see even the yoke. Sometimes the sledge drove into fir-trees, sometimes something dark scratched the turner's hands and flashed past his eyes. But he saw nothing except a whirling field of white.

"To live over again!" he said to himself. He remembered that forty years ago Matrena was young, pretty, and gay, and that she came from a prosperous home. It was his reputation as craftsman that won her. And, indeed, he had every qualification for living well. But soon after marriage he began to drink, he sprawled all day on the stove, and, it seemed to him, he slept ever since. He remembered his wedding-day, but of what followed he could recall nothing save that he drank, sprawled, fought. And so passed forty years.

The white snow-clouds turned slowly grey. Evening was near.

"Where am I going? asked the turner. "I ought to be taking her home, and here I am still going to hospital! I am going crazy!"

The turner again pulled round his horse and again flogged it. The mare strained all her strength, snorted, and broke into a trot. Behind the turner something tapped, tapped, tapped; and though he dared not look around, he knew that it was his wife's head banging against the back of the sledge. As the air darkened the wind blew colder and sharper.

"To live over again!" thought the turner. "To get new tools, to take orders, to give money to the old woman. . . . Yes!"

He dropped the reins. A moment later he tried to find them, but failed. His hands no longer obeyed him.

"It is all the same," he thought. "She will go on herself. She knows the road. To sleep a bit now. . . . Then the funeral, a mass. . . ."

He closed his eyes and slumbered. A moment later, as it seemed to him, the horse stopped. He opened his eyes and saw before something dark, a cabin or hay rick.

He tried to get out of the seldge to find out where he was, but his body was numbed with such pleasant indolence that he felt he would sooner freeze than move. And he fell restfully asleep.

He awoke in a big room with red walls. Through the window came bright sunrays. The turner saw men before him,

and he obeyed his first instinct to show himself off as a serious man, a man with ideas.

"Have a mass served, brothers!" he begun. "Tell the priest . . ."

"That is all right!" came back voices. "Lie down!"

"*Batiushka!* Pavl Ivanuitch!" said the turner in amazement. He saw the doctor before him. "Your honour! Benefactor!"

He wished to jump up and throw himself at the doctor's feet. But his hands and feet no longer obeyed him.

"Your honour, where are my legs? Where are my hands?"

"Good-bye to your legs and hands! They're frozen off, that's all. Well, well . . . there's no use crying. You are old . . . glory be to God . . . sixty years' life is enough!"

"Forgive me, your honour! If you could give me five or six years!"

"Why do you want them?"

"The horse isn't mine. I must return it! . . . The old woman must be buried. . . . *Akh,* how quickly things happen in this world! Your honour! Pavl Ivanuitch! A cigar-case of birchwood of the first quality? I will make you croquet-balls . . ."

The doctor waved his hand and went out of the room.

The turner was dead.

Women

In the village of Riabuzhka, opposite the church, stands a house with stone foundations, an iron roof two stories high. In the lower story, with the owner, Philip Ivanoff Kamin, nicknamed "Diudya" keeps his family overhead, in rooms hot in summer and cold in winter, lodge passing officials, merchants, and country gentlemen. Diudya rents land, sells a drink of tar honey and magpies; and is worth a good eight thousand roubles as bank records could show.

Feodor, his elder son, is foreman mechanic at a factory; and, as the peasants say, he is so far up the hill that you can't get near him. Homely and sickly Sophia, Feodor's wife, lives at home with her father-in-law, cries half the day, and every Sunday drives to hospital for treatment. Hunchbacked Aliosha, Diudya's second son, also lives at home. He lately married Varvara, who is young, pretty, healthy, poor and fond of dress. The passing officials and traders let no one serve them in room or shop but Varvara.

One evening in July as the sun set, and the air reeked of hay, hot manure, and new milk, into Diudya's yard came a cart with three men. One, aged about thirty, wore a canvas suit; the boy of seven or eight beside him wore a long black coat with big buttons; the third, a young lad in a red shirt, was the driver.

The driver unhitched the horses and walked them up and down the street; and the man of thirty washed, prayed towards the church, and spreading a fur rug beside the cart, sat down with the boy to supper. He ate slowly and gravely; and Diudya, who had studied many a traveller in his day, found him a capable, serious man, who knew his own worth.

Diudya, capless, and in shirt-sleeves, sat on the steps and waited for the traveller to speak. His patrons usually spent the evening story-telling, and their stories gave him pleasure. His old wife Afanasievna and his daughter-in-law Sophia milked cows in a shed; Varvara, wife of his younger son, sat upstairs at an open window and ate sunflower seeds.

"I suppose this boy is your son?" asked Diudya.

"My adopted son," answered the traveller. "I took him, orphan, for the saving of my soul."

The pair soon gossiped at ease. The traveller seemed a takative, eloquent man; and Diudya learned that he was a petty burgher from town, a house-owner, by name Matvei Savvitch, that he was on his way to inspect some gardens which he rented from German colonists, and that the boy's name was Kuzka. It was hot and stifling; no one wished to sleep. When it grew dark, and the sky was dotted with pale stars, Matvei Savvitch began to tell the story of Kuzka. Afanasievna and Sophia stood some way off, and Kuzka loitered at the gate.

"I may say, grandfather, that this story is involved in the extreme," began Matvei Savvitch. "If I were to tell you everything that happened it would last all night. Well! About ten years ago in our street, exactly in a line with us, where now stands the candle factory and oil mill, lived Marya Semionovna Kapluntseff, an old widow with two sons. One of these sons was a tram-conductor; the other, Vasya, a lad of my own age, lived at home with his mother. Old Kapluntseff had kept horses—five pairs of them—and sent his draymen all over town; and his widow continued the business, and, as she managed the draymen no worse than her husband, on some days she made a clear five roubles profit.

"And Vasya, too, had his earnings. He kept prize tumblers and sold them to fanciers; I remember him standing on the roof, throwing up a broom and whistling, and the pigeons would fly right into the sky. He trapped goldfinches and starlings, and made good cages. A trifling business, you think, but you can easily make your ten roubles a month out of trifles. Well . . . as time passed the old woman lost the use of her legs, and lay all day in bed. The house remained without mistress, and what is that but a man without eyes? The old woman resolved to marry her Vasya. She hired a match-maker, did everything quickly . . . woman's talk . . . and Vasya went to have a look at his bride. She was the widow Samokvalika's Mashenka. Vasya didn't waste time over it; in one week the whole business was finished. She was a young girl, little, shortish, with a white, pleasant face—all the qualities of a young lady; and a portion too, not bad—five hundred roubles, a cow, a bed! And the old woman—she felt it coming—two days after the wedding set out for Jerusalem of the hills, where there is neither sickness nor sighs. The young ones said mass for her soul and began to live. Six months they lived together happily; and then, suddenly, a new misfortune! Vasya was summoned to draw lots as a conscript. They took him, poor fellow, as a soldier, and remitted nothing. They shaved his head, and packed him off to the kingdom of Poland. It was God's will, and there was no appeal. When he said good-bye to his wife in the yard

he was cool enough, but, looking upwards at the hayloft with the pigeons, he cried as if his heart would break. It hurt me to see him. For company's sake Mashenka took her mother to live with her; and the mother stayed till child was born, that is, this same Kuzka; and then went away to another married daughter who lived at Oboyan. So Mashenka was left with her child. And there were five draymen, all drunken and impudent; horses and carts; broken fences and soot catching fire in the chimneys—no affair at all for a woman. And as I was a neighbour, she would come to me on all sorts of business; and I did my best for her, arranged more than one affair, gave her advice. And sometimes I would go to her house, have a drink, and a bit of a chat. I was a young man, clever, and I loved to talk about things; and she, too, was educated and had good manners. She dressed neatly and carried a parasol in summer. I remember; I would start upon theology or politics, and she felt flattered by this, and would treat me to tea and jam. . . In short, grandfather, I will waste no more words on it, a year had not passed when the unclean spirit seized me, the enemy of all mankind! I noticed that when a day passed without meeting Mashenka I felt out of sorts, and was bored. And all my time was spent in finding excuses to call on her. 'It's time,' I'd say to myself, 'to put in the double window-frames'; and I would spend the whole day in her house putting in the frames, and carefully leaving the work unfinished, so as to return next day. 'We ought to count Vasya's pigeons, and make sure none are lost.' And so on always. I spent hours talking to her across the fence; and at last, to avoid going round to the door, I made a little gate in the fence. Woman's sex is the cause of much evil and offence in this world! Not only we, sinners, but even holy men are seduced. Mashenka did not repulse me. When she ought to have thought of her husband, and kept guard on her conduct, she fell in love with me. I noticed soon that she also was tired of it, and that she spent all day walking along the fence and looking through the crevices into my yard.

"My head whirled round. On Thursday in Holy Week I was up early, before daybreak; I had to go to market. I had to pass the gate; and the devil was there! The grating of the gate was raised, and there stood Mashenka in the middle of the yard, already up, and busy feeding the ducks. I lost control of myself. I called her by name. She came up and looked at me through the grating. Her face was white, her eyes were sleepy and caressing. I liked her very much! And I began to pay her compliments as if we were not at the gate, but as if it were a birthday visit. And Mashenka blushed, laughed, and looked at me with the same eyes, never taking them off me. I went quite mad, and told her straight that I loved her. She opened the gate, let me in, and from that day forward we lived as man and wife."

Matvei paused. Into the yard, breathless, came hunchback Aliosha, and, without looking at the group, ran into the house; a minute later he rushed out with a concertina, and jingling the coppers in his pocket and chewing a sunflower seed, disappeared behind the gate.

"Who is that man?" asked Matvei Savvitch.

"My son Alexei," answered Diudya.

"He's gone off to amuse himself, rascal! God cursed him with a hump, so we're not hard on him!"

"He does nothing but play with the children," sighed Afansievna. "Before Shrovetide we married him, and thought he'd improve, but he's got worse than ever."

"It was no use," said Diudya. "We only made a strange girl happy, without profit."

From behind the church came the sound of a mournful but pleasant song. The words were indistinguishable, but the voices, two tenors and a bass, could easily be made out. All listened. Suddenly two of the singers, with a loud laugh, ceased to sing, but the third, the tenor, continued, and sang so high that all mechanically looked upward as if they thought the voice had reached the sky. Varvara came out of the house, and, shading her eyes with her hand as if the sun dazzled her, looked at the church.

"It's the priest's sons and the schoolmaster," she said. Again all three voices sang together. Matvei Savvitch sighed and continued:—

"So it happened, grandfather! . . . Well, in two years a letter came from Vasya. He wrote from Warsaw and told us that he had been discharged for ill-health. He was invalided. But by that time I had driven my madness out of my head, and, what's more, I was thinking of making a good match, and was only waiting an excuse to get rid of my lovebird. Every day I resolved to speak to Mashenka, but I never knew how to begin, and I can't abide a woman's howl. The letter gave me my chance. As Mashenka read it aloud to me she turned white as snow. and I said to her, 'Glory be to God,' I said. 'Thou wilt again be an honest woman.' She answered. 'I never loved him, and I married him against my will. My mother forced me to.' But that doesn't get round the question, fool,' I said. 'Were you married to him in church or not?' 'I was married in church,' she answered me, 'but I love only thee, and I will be thy wife till thy very death. Let people jeer at me! I care nothing for them!' 'You are a believing woman,' I said to her. 'You read the Bible; what is there written there?' "

"Once given to her husband with her husband she must live," said Diudya.

"Husband and wife are of one flesh and blood," resumed Matvei Savvitch. " 'Thou and I have sinned,' I said. 'We must listen to our consciences and have the fear of God. We will ask forgiveness of Vasya. He is a peaceful, timid man—he won't murder you. But better,' I added, 'far better in this world to tolerate torture from thy lawful husband than gnash thy teeth when the Day of Judgment is nigh!' The silly wouldn't listen to me. Not a word would she say but 'I love thee!' and nothing more. Vasya came home on the Saturday before Trinity early in the morning. I watched the whole business through the fence. In ran Vasya into the house, and a minute later out he came with Kuzka in his arms, laughing and crying at the same time. He kissed Kuzka and looked up at the hayloft; he wanted to go to his pigeons, but he wouldn't let hold of Kuzka. He was a soft sort of man—sentimental! The day passed quietly enough. They rang the bells for the vesper service, and I kept thinking to myself, 'Why don't they decorate the gates and the yard with birches? Some-

thing is wrong,' I thought. I went into their house and looked. Vasya sat on the floor in the middle of the room, twitching his eyes as if in drink; the tears flowed down his cheeks, his hands shook; he took out of his handkerchief cracknels, necklaces, gingerbread—all sorts of gifts—and threw them on the floor. Kuzka—he was then aged three—crept on the floor and chewed the gingerbreads; and Mashenka stood by the stove, pale and trembling, and muttered, 'I am not thy wife; I will not live with thee,' and a lot more nonsense of that kind. I threw myself on the boards at Vasya's feet and said, 'We two are guilty before thee, Vassili Maksimuitch; forgive us for the love of Christ!' and then I rose and said to Mashenka, 'It is your duty, Marya Semionovna, to wash Vassili Maksimuitch's feet, and be to him an obedient wife, and pray for me to God that He, the All-Merciful, may forgive me my sin.' I was inspired by a heavenly angel! I spoke edification; spoke with such feeling that I began to cry. And two days later up to me comes Vasya. 'I forgive you,' says he; 'I forgive you, Matiusha, and I forgive my wife; God be with you both. She is a soldier's wife after all, and women are queer things; she is young, it was hard for her to guard herself. She is not the first, and she will not be the last. There is only one thing,' he added. 'I beg you henceforth to live as if there was nothing between us; let nothing be seen, and I,' he says, 'will try to please her in everything so that she may love me again.' He gave me his hand on it, drank some tea, and went away contented. 'Glory be to God!' I said to myself; and I felt happy that all had been settled so well. But hardly had Vasya got outside the yard when Mashenka appears. I had no peace, you see! She hung on my neck, howled, and implored me 'For the love of God do not forsake me! I cannot live without thee! I cannot, I cannot!' "

"The shameless trull!" sighed Diudya.

"But I bawled at her, stamped my feet, dragged her into the hall, and locked the door. 'Go back!' I shouted, 'to thy husband. Do not shame me before the people! Have the fear of God in thy heart.' And every day this history was repeated. I stood one morning in the yard near the stable and mended a bridle. Suddenly up I looked, and saw her running through the gate, bare-footed, with nothing on but a petticoat. Straight up to me she ran, seized the bridle, and got covered with tar, and trembling all over, howled, ' I cannot live with that brute! It is beyond my strength. If thou no longer lovest me, then kill me!' It was too much for my patience. I struck her twice with the bridle. But at that moment in runs Vasya and cries despairingly, 'Don't strike her, don't strike her.' But he himself seemed to have gone out of his mind, for, flourishing his arms, he began to beat her with his clenched fists with all his might, then flung her down in the dust, and trampled her into it. I tried to defend her, but he seized hold of the reins, and beat her without mercy. Beat her as he'd beat a horse, gee, gee, gee!"

"A good thing if they did it to you," growled Varvara, walking away. "You murdered our sister between you, accursed!"

"Hold your tongue!" shouted Diudya. "Mare!"

"Gee, gee, gee!" continued Matvei

Savvitch. "One of the draymen ran in from his yard; I called up some of my workmen, and between us we rescued Mashenka and carried her home. It was a shame! She lay there in bed, all bandaged, all in compresses—only her eyes and nose could be seen—and looked up at the ceiling.

"'Good day, Marya Semionovna,' I would say to her. But she spoke not a word.

"And Vasya sat in another room, tore his hair, and cried, 'I am a ruffian! I have murdered my wife! Send me in Thy mercy, Lord, death."

"I sat half an hour with Mashenka, and spoke edification. I frightened her.

"'The righteous,' I said. 'The righteous of this world are rewarded in Paradise, but thy place is fiery Gehenna with all adulteresses . . . . Do not dare resist thy husband, go down on thy knees to him!' But she hadn't a word for me; even her eyes were still; I might as well have preached to a pillar.

"A day later Vasya was taken ill—something, it was, like cholera; and that same evening I heard he was dead. They buried him. Mashenka was not at the funeral; she wouldn't let people see her shameless face and her blue marks. But soon they began to say in town that Vasya's death was not natural, that he was murdered by Mashenka. The police soon heard it. They dug up Vasya, cut him open, and found his stomach full of arsenic. It was a simple case. Of course, the police took away Mashenka, and with her innocent Kuzka. They put her in gaol. . . . About eight months later she was tried. She sat, I remember, in the dock in a grey gown with a white handkerchief on her head—thin, pale, sharp-eyed, the picture of misery. And behind her a soldier with a rifle! Of course she denied it. Some said she'd poisoned her husband; others argued that he had poisoned himself from grief. Anyway, I was a witness. When they questioned me I told them the honest truth. 'She was a sinful woman,' I told them. 'She did not love her husband—it's no use hiding it. She was an obstinate woman. . . .' The trial began in the morning and didn't end till night. It was penal servitude in Sibera, thirteen years of it.

"Mashenka remained in our local gaol three months after trial. I used to go and see her. I was sorry for her, and would bring her tea and sugar. . . . And she—I remember—when she caught sight of me, would wring her hands, and mutter, 'Go away! Go away.' And Kuzka would press himself to her dress, as if he feared I might take him. 'Look!' I would say to Mashenka. 'See what you've brought yourself to! *Akh*, Masha, Masha, perishing soul! When I tried to teach you reason, you wouldn't listen; so weep now! It is you yourself,' I would say, 'who are guilty; accuse yourself!' And I spoke edification to her; but the only words she answered were, 'Go away! Go away!' Then she'd press little Kuzka to the wall, and tremble all over. Well! When she was taken out of our province, I went to see her off at the railway station, and put into her hand a rouble, for Christ's sake. She didn't reach Sibera. Before she had crossed the government frontier she was down with gaol-fever, and in gaol she died."

"To a dog a dog's death!" said Diuyda.

"Kuzka was sent back. I thought the

matter out, and took him to live with me. What else could I do? He's a sprig of a gaol-bird, that's true, but all the same he's a Christian, a living soul. I was sorry for him. I will make him a clerk, and if I have no children of mine, a trader. Nowadays, wherever I go I take him with me; he is learning business."

While Matvei Savvitch told his story, Kuzka sat on a stone at the gate, and, resting his head on his hands, looked at the sky; when it grew dusk he looked like a stump of a tree.

"Kuzka, go to bed!" cried Matvei Savvitch.

"It's time," said Diudya, rising. He yawned audibly, and added, "They think themselves clever and disobey their elders—that's the cause of their troubles."

The moon already shone in the sky overhead; it seemed to speed swiftly to one side and the clouds beneath it to the other; the clouds drifted away and the moon was soon clear of them. Matvei Savvitch prayed towards the church, bade the others good night, and lay on the ground near his cart. Kuzka also prayed, lay down in the cart, and covered himself with a coat; to increase his comfort he made a hollow in the hay, and bent in two until his elbows touched his knees. From the yard could be seen Diudya, lighting a candle in the lower story; after which he took his spectacles, stood in the corner with a book, bowed before the ikon, and read.

The travellers slept. Afanasievna and Sophia crept up to the cart, and looked at Kuzka.

"The orphan's asleep," said the old woman. "All skin and bone, poor lad! No mother on earth, and no one to feed him on his journey."

"My Grishutka, I think, is about two years older," said Sophia. "He lives in that factory like a slave, and has no mother either. . . . His master beats him. When I first looked at this lad he reminded me of my Grishutka; the blood in my heart froze up."

Five minutes passed in silence.

"I wonder does he remember his mother," said the old woman.

"How should he remember?"

And from Sophia's eyes fell big tears.

"He's twisted himself into a roll," she said, sobbing and laughing from pity and emotion. "Poor little orphan!"

Kuzka started and opened his eyes. He saw above him an ugly, wrinkled, tear-stained face; and near it another face, old and toothless, with a sharp chin and a humped nose; and above the faces was the unfathomable sky with its flying clouds and moon. He cried out with terror. Sophia also cried out; an echo answered both; and the heavy air seemed to tremble with restlessness. A watchman not far off signalled; a dog barked. Matvei Savvitch muttered in his sleep, and turned on the other side.

Late at night when the others—Diudya, his wife, and the watchman—were asleep, Sophia came out to the gate and sat on a bench. The heat was still stifling, and her head ached from crying. The street was wide and long; it stretched two versts to the right, and two more to the left—there was no end to it. One side only was lighted by the moon; the other lay in deep gloom; the long shadows from poplars and starling-cotes stretched across it, and the black and menacing shadow of the church spread far, embracing Diudya's

gate and half his house. No one moved or spoke. But from the end of the street came faint sounds of music. Aliosha played on his concertina.

Something moved in the shadow of the church fence; but no one could say whether it was man or cow, or neither—perhaps the sound came from some big bird rustling in the trees. But suddenly out of this shadow came a figure, and this figure stopped, said something in a man's voice, and disappeared down a lane near the church. A minute later, two fathoms from the gate emerged a woman, who, seeing Sophia on the bench, stood still.

"Varvara, is it you?" asked Sophia.

"I."

It was Varvara. She stood still a moment longer, then came up to the bench and sat down.

"Where have you been" asked Sophia.

Varvara was silent.

"You will bring the same end on yourself, young one," said Sophia. "You heard about Mashenka, and the trampling underfoot . . . and the reins. Take care that something of that sort doesn't happen to you."

"I don't care if it does."

Varvara laughed in her handkerchief, and said in a whisper—

"I have been with the priest's son."

"Nonsense?"

"I swear."

"It's a sin!" whispered Sophia.

"I don't care. It's nothing to regret. A sin is a sin, and better the lightning strike me than lead such a life. I am young . . . and healthy, and my husband is a hunchback, miserable, surly, worse than Diudya accursed! Before I was married I had not enough to eat and walked barefoot; but for the sake of Aliosha's money I became a slave, like a fish in a net, and I would sooner sleep with a serpent than with this scabby Aliosha. And your life? Can you bear it? Your Feodor sent you home to his father from the factory, and lives there with another woman; he took your boy away from you and sold you into slavery. You work like a horse, and never hear a decent word. Better never marry, better take half-roubles from the son of the priest, better beg for bread. drown yourself in a well . . ."

"It's a sin!" sighed Sophia.

"I don't care."

From the church again came the mournful song of the three voices, the two tenors and the bass. And again the words were indistinguishable.

And Varvara began to whisper that she went out at night with the priest's son, and told what he said to her, and what his friends were like; and that she carried on also with passing officials and traders. And Sophia began to laugh; she felt it was sinful and awful and sweet to listen; and she envied Varvara, and felt sorry that she had not been a sinner when she was young and handsome.

The church bells struck midnight.

"It's time for bed," said Sophia, rising. "Diudya may catch us."

Both went cautiously into the yard.

"I went away and didn't hear what happened to Mashenka afterwards," said Varvara, spreading her bed under the window.

"She died, he said, in prison. She poisoned her husband."

Varvara lay down beside Sophia, thought, and said softly—

"I could murder my Aliosha without a qualm."

"You talk nonsense, God be with you."

When Sophia was almost asleep Varvara pressed against her and whispered in her ear—

"Let us murder Diudya and Aliosha!"

Sophia shuddered and said nothing at first. After a moment she opened her eyes and looked steadfastly at the sky.

"People would find out," she said.

"Nobody'll find out. Diudya is old; his time, in any case, has come; and Aliosha, they'll say, killed himself with drink."

Neither of the women slept. Both thought, silently.

"It's cold," said Sophia, beginning to shudder. "I expect it will soon be light, Are you asleep?"

"No. . . . Pay no attention to what I said to you," whispered Varvara. "I lose my temper with them, accursed, and sometimes don't myself know what I say. . . . Go to sleep!"

The two women were silent, and gradually calmed down and went to sleep.

Old Afanasievna awoke first of all. She called Sophia, and both went to the shed to milk the cows. Next appeared hunchback Aliosha, hopelessly drunk, and without his concertina. His chest and knees were covered with dust and straw; it was plain he had fallen on the road. Rolling tipsily from side to side, he went into the shed and, without undressing, threw himself on a sledge and at once began to snore. When the rising sun burnt with a fierce glow the crosses on the church, when later the windows imaged it, when across the yard through the dewy grass stretched shadows from the trees, only then did Matvei Savvitch rise and begin to bustle about.

"Kuzka, get up!" he shouted. "It's time to yoke the horses. Look sharp!"

The morning's work began. A young Jewess in a brown, flounced dress led a horse to water. The windlass creaked plaintively, the bucket rattled. Kuzka, sleepy, unrested, covered with dew, sat on the cart and drew on his coat lazily and, listening to the water splashing in the well, shuddered from the cold.

"Auntie!" cried Matvei Savvitch. "Sing out to my lad to come and yoke the horses!"

And at the same minute Diudya called out of the window—

"Sophia, make the Jewess pay a kopeck for the water. They take it always, the scabbies!"

Up and down the street ran bleating sheep; women bawled at the shepherd; and the shepherd played his reed, flourished his whip, and answered in a rough, hoarse bass. Three sheep ran into the yard and crowded together at the fence. The noise awoke Varvara, who took her bed in her arms and went towards the house.

"You might at least drive out the sheep!" cried the old woman. "My fine lady!"

"What more? You think I'll work for a pack of Herods like you," growled Varvara, entering the house.

The axles were soon oiled and the horses harnessed. From the house came Diudya with an abacus, and sitting on the steps, made up his account against the travellers for lodging, oats, and water.

"You charge high, grandfather, for the oats," said Matvei Savvitch.

"If they're too dear, don't take them. We won't force you to."

When the travellers were ready to

climb into the cart an accident delayed them. Kuzka had lost his cap.

"What have you done with it, swine?" bawled Matvei Savvitch angrily. "Where is it gone to?"

Kuzka's face was contorted with terror. He searched about the cart and, finding no cap there, went to the gates. The old woman and Sophia also searched.

"I'll cut off your ears," roared Matvei Savvitch. "Accursed pup!"

The cap was found at the bottom of the cart. Kuzka brushed the hay from it, put it on timidly as if he expected a blow from behind, and took his seat. Matvei Savvitch crossed himself, the driver pulled the reins, and the cart rolled slowly out of the yard.

A Husk

In a shed belonging to the Starost, Procofi, on the outskirts of the village of Mironocitsk, some belated sportsmen had disposed themselves to spend the night. There were two, the veterinary-surgeon, Ivan Ivanitch, and the schoolmaster, Burkin. Ivan Ivanitch bore a somewhat strange family name—Tchimsha Himalayski—which seemed in no wise to fit him; so in the whole district he was simply known by his name and patronymic. He lived near the town on a stud-farm, and had come to do a little shooting so as to get a breath of fresh air. The schoolmaster, Burkin, spent every summer on the property of Count N——, and for some time had felt quite at home there.

They were not yet asleep. Ivan Ivanitch, a tall, spare old man, with long moustaches, was sitting in the moonlight outside the door, smoking his pipe. Burkin was lying inside on the hay, and could not be seen in the darkness.

They were telling each other stories. Among other things, they spoke about the Starost's wife, Mavra, a healthy and not stupid woman, who in all her life had never been outside her native village, had never seen any town nor railway, and for the last ten years had sat by her stove all day, and taken her walks abroad at nights.

"There is nothing wonderful in that," said Burkin. "People who are solitary by nature, who, like the anchorite crab or snail, seek to retire into their shell, are not so scarce in this world. It may be a manifestation of atavism, a return to that epoch when the predecessors of man were not yet gregarious animals, but lived alone in their holes; and it may also be simply one of the human character's diversities—who knows? I am not a naturalist, and it is not my concern to solve such questions. I only wish to say that people like Mavra are not of such rare occurrence. Why, not to seek further, two months ago a teacher of Greek, a friend of mine, a certain Bielikov, died in our town. You must assuredly have heard of him? His peculiarity was, that even in the very finest weather he would go out in galoshes, carry an umbrella, and wear a wadded coat. His umbrella was always in its sheath, his watch always in a chamois-leather case, and when he pulled

out his pocket-knife to sharpen a pencil, that also was in its little case. He wore black eye-glasses, a waist-coat, stuffed cotton wool in his ears, and when he got into a cab he had the hood put up. In fact, one noticed in this individual a fixed and irresistible longing to withdraw into a cover, to make, as it were, a husk around himself, which would isolate him and protect him from outside influences. Actuality annoyed him, alarmed him, kept him in a constant state of suspense, and it may have been to justify this timidity of his, this repugnance to the present, that he always lauded the past and things which had never existed; and the dead tongues which he taught were, in reality, those same galoshes and umbrella behind which he sought protection in actual life.

"'Oh, how sonorous, how beautiful is the Greek language!' he exclaimed, with a fond expression, and as a proof of his assertion he blinked his eyes, raised a finger, and pronounced the word: 'Anthropos!'

"Bielikov strove, too, to wrap up his thoughts in a sheath. For him the only clear things were circulars and newspaper articles in which something was forbidden. When a circular was published forbidding teachers to be out in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, or some newspaper article censured carnality, that was definite and obvious to him—and so *basta*. In a decision or a concession always lay an element of doubt, something undefined and disquieting. If the town decided to allow a dramatic circle or a reading-club, or a tea-shop, he would shake his head, and say gently: 'They are quite right; of course, it's most excellent, but what will come of it?'

"Any kind of infraction, deviation, or violation of rules plunged him in despair, although, as it might happen, it had nothing to do with him. If any of his companions were late for the Te Deum, or there were rumors of some students' pranks, or an instructress had been seen late in the evening in the company of some officer, he would get very much agitated, and continually repeat: 'What will come of it?' And at our Teachers' Meetings he simply trampled on us with his precaution, his mistrust, and his sheath-bound statements with respect to things, such as: in mixed schools the young people always behave badly, always make a noise in class. 'Ah; may the heads not hear of it. Ah! What will come of it?' That if Peter were expelled from the second class, and George from the fourth, it would be a very good thing. Well, what with his sighs, his complaints, his black eye-glasses, his small white face—you know he was like a polecat—he so oppressed us that we yielded, lessened Peter's and George's good conduct marks, had them punished, and finally expelled Peter and George.

"He had a peculiar habit of walking unbidden into our rooms. He would come into the class-room, and sit down in silence and as if in contemplation of something. There he would sit, hour after hour, without uttering a word, then go away. This was called 'keeping on good terms with his colleagues.' Apparently, coming thus to our rooms was irksome to him, and he only did it because he considered it a friendly obligation. We teachers were afraid of him. And the director, too, was afraid of him. Just think, we teachers are all a thinking folk, thoroughly orderly

brought up on Turgeniev and Chtchedrine. Yet this specimen of a man, always going about in galoshes and carrying an umbrella, kept in hand the whole school for fully fifteen years! Nay, the whole school?—the whole town! Our womenkind did not organize private theatricals on Saturdays for fear lest he should hear of it; our priests were embarrassed in his presence if they were not fasting, or if they played cards. Under the influence of such a person as was Bielikov, the whole town for the last ten to fifteen years was afraid of everything. They were afraid to speak too loud, to send letters, to make acquaintances, to read books; they were afraid to help the poor, to teach. . . ."

Ivan Ivanitch wished to say something, and coughed, but first took a puff at his pipe, looked at the moon, and then said very deliberately:

"Yes. Thinking, orderly people read Chtchedrine and Turgeniev, there are several Bokels there, and others who submitted and endured. And that's just what it is."

"Bielikov lived where I did," continued Burkin, "on the same floor, next door to me; we saw a lot of each other, and I knew him very intimately. At home it was the same story, dressing-gown, night-cap, shutters, locks, a whole array of protective limitations, and ever, 'What will come of it?' Fasting was injurious, and the reverse useless, so, if you please, they say Bielikov did not keep the fasts, but ate pike-perch with butter, which is not fasting, neither can be called full fare. He did not keep a woman-servant, for fear of evil suspicions, so he kept a man-cook, Athanasius, a man of sixty, a drunkard and half wit, who had been a soldier-servant, and had some idea of cooking. Athanasius generally stood about the door, with his arms crossed, and muttering, with a deep sigh, always the same thing: 'They have discharged a lot of *them* now.'

"Bielikov's bedroom was small, about the size of a box, and his bed had curtains. He also lay with his head under the bed-clothes. His room was hot and stuffy; the wind rattled at the door, thrummed in the stove; there were sounds of deep sighing in the kitchen, sighs of ill-omen. . . . And he lay trembling under his bed-clothing. He was afraid something was about to happen, that Athanasius would murder him, that thieves would steal in; all night he would have terrifying dreams, and in the morning, when we went to the school together, he was downcast and pale, and it was quite evident that the thronged school, towards which he was walking, was awful and antagonistic to his whole being, and that to walk alongside of me was irksome to him, who by nature was such a solitary-disposed man.

" 'They make a great deal of noise in our classes,' he said, as if striving to find an explanation for his feeling of depression. 'It's like nothing on earth.'

"Now, would you believe it, this teacher of Greek, this man in the husk, almost got married!"

Ivan Ivanitch glanced quickly round into the shed, and said:

"You're joking!"

"Yes, however strange it may seem, he almost got married. They appointed, as a new teacher of history and geography, a certain Kovalenko, Michael Savitch, a Little Russian. He did not arrive alone, but came with his sister.

Varinka. He was young, tall, sun-burnt, had enormous hands; by his face you could see he had a bass voice, and in fact it was so—it seemed to come out of a barrel. She was not quite young—about thirty—but was also tall, well-built, black-browed, red-cheeked, in a word, not a maid but marmalade! She was jolly, noisy, always singing Little Russian songs and roaring with laughter; about nothing she would break out into her loud 'Ha—ha—ha!' Our first real acquaintance with the Kovalenkos took place, I remember, on the director's namesday. Among those austere, deadly-bored pedagogues, who attend the namesday out of necessity, suddenly we see a new Aphrodite born out of the foam: she walked with her hands on her hips, laughed loudly, sang, danced. . . . She sang, with great feeling, 'Blew the whirlwinds,' then another song, and yet another, till she captivated us all, even Bielikov. He sat by her side and said, smiling sweetly:

"'The Little Russian accents, by their tenderness and soft harmonies, remind one of the ancient Greek.'

"This flattered her, and she began telling him, touchingly and convincingly, of a farm she owned in the district of Gadiatchsko; that on the farm resided her old nurse, and that such pears grew there, such melons, such watermelons! The Little Russians call pumpkins, watermelons, and watermelons, gourds, and they make their borshtch with little red and bluey ones, 'which are so tasty, so *awfully* tasty.'

"We listened and listened, then, all at once, the very same thought flashed upon us all:

"'It would be such a good thing to marry them,' whispered the director's wife to me.

"For some reason or other, we all remembered that our Bielikov was unmarried, and it now seemed to us odd that up to this time we had not noticed, had driven from view, such an important detail of his life. How does he usually behave with women, how does he solve for himself this quotidian question? Previously it had had no interest whatever for us; it may be that we never entertained the thought that a man who in no matter what weather, walked about in galoshes, and slept under a curtain could love.

"'He is well over forty, and she is thirty,' putting words to her thought said the director's wife. 'It's likely she would do very well for him.'

"How much that is useless and absurd do we not do in the provinces out of boredom! And that, because we entirely neglect what ought to be done. For instance, now, why should we all at once find it necessary to marry Bielikov, whom it was impossible even to imagine married to oneself? The director's wife, the inspector's wife, and all the lady-teachers of our school resuscitated, looked better, as if they had suddenly discovered the aim of life. The director's wife takes a box at the theater, and behold! in it sits the radiantly happy Varinka fanning herself, and by her side little Bielikov, sitting doubled up and looking as if he had been dragged there with forceps. I gave a small evening party, and the ladies insisted on my inviting both Bielikov and Varinka. In a word, they were all working the wheels. It seemed also as if Varinka was not averse to getting married. Her life with her brother was

ot so very cheerful; we knew that they ought and abused each other for days ogether. Here is an instance: Kovalenko, a tall, strong, clumsy-looking gure, wearing a peasant's shirt, and ith a lock of hair falling below his ap on his forehead, strides down the treet; he has a packet of books in one and, and a thick knobbly stick in the ther. His sister walks just behind him, lso with a packet of books.

" 'All the same, Michael, you did not ead it!' she loudly disputes. 'I tell you, swear you never read it at all!'

" 'And I tell you I did read it!' shouts Kovalenko, thumping his stick on the avement.

" 'Ah, good God, Mintchick! What o you get so angry for, seeing the essential thing for us is conversation?'

" 'And I tell you, I did read it!' yet ouder shouts Kovalenko.

"And if an outsider came to the house, fusillade began at once. Such a life ssuredly bored her, she wanted her own ook; and one must also take her age nto consideration. There was not much me to pick and choose; it was better to arry him who offered himself even if e were a teacher of Greek. And one ust allow that, so long as they married did not much matter to our young dies who the man was. However this ay be, Varinka began to show a very ecided inclination for Bielikov.

"And what about Bielikov? He sited Kovalenko just as he did us. He ould go and see him, and remain seated silence. He remained silent, and arinka would sing to him 'Blew the hirlwind,' or gaze at him with her dark ensive eyes, or suddenly burst into a ud 'Ha, ha, ha!'

"In love affairs, and especially with marriage, suggestion plays a great part. Everyone—his companions and the ladies—began to assure Bielikov that he ought to marry, that nothing remained to him in life but to marry. We all congratulated him, uttered divers platitudes with serious faces, such as, Marriage was a serious step. Besides, Varinka was not ugly; she was interesting, she was the daughter of a Councillor, and owned a farm; and, most important of all, she was the first woman who had shown favor and fondness for him. His head began to swim, and he decided that in very deed he ought to get married."

"But then he ought to have thrown aside his galoshes and umbrella," interposed Ivan Ivanitch.

"Imagine, though, this evidently was impossible. He placed Varinka's photograph on his table, was always coming to me and talking about Varinka, about family life, that marriage was a serious step, often visited the Kovalenkos, but his manner of life he changed not a tittle. On the contrary, even his resolve to marry had an almost harmful effect on him; he grew thinner, paler, and seemed to retire further into his husk.

" 'I like Varvara Savischna,' he said to me with a feeble, forced smile, 'and I know marriage is indispensable for everyone, but . . . all this, do you know, has happened so suddenly. . . . I must think it over.'

" 'What is there to think over?' I asked him. 'Marry, and that's all about it.'

" 'No, marriage is a serious matter, and one must first duly consider the actual obligations and responsibilities, so that nothing unforeseen should happen.

It all disturbs me, so that I lie awake every night. And, I confess, it frightens me. She and her brother have a rather strange trend of thought; their reasonings, you know, are somewhat odd, and in character they are intrepid. One might get married, and later, in spite of everything, get into some trouble.'

"So he did not propose, always procrastinated, to the great annoyance of the director's wife and all our womenkind. He was all the time weighing his actual obligations and responsibilities, and, meanwhile, went out walking nearly every day with Varinka, thinking, no doubt, that this was necessary under the circumstances, and came to me to talk over family life. And most likely, in the end he would have proposed, and consummated one of those useless, stupid marriages of which from boredom, and having nothing to do, there are thousands, if, all of a sudden, there had not arisen a *Kolossalische Scandal*. It is incumbent to say that Varinka's brother, Kovalenko, loathed Bielikov, and could not stand him from the first day of their acquaintance.

"'I cannot understand,' he said to us, shrugging his shoulders, 'how you put up with such a spy, such an abominable rascal. Oh, how you can live here! Your whole atmosphere is stifling and infected. Are all your teachers pedagogues? You are functionary-ridden; yours is not a seat of learning, but an ecclesiastical tribunal, and it has a nauseous stink like a police court. No, mates, I shall stay here a little longer, and then shall go to my farm, and there catch crabs, and teach the Little Russians. I shall go away, and you will remain with your little Judas.'

"Or else, he would laugh till he cried in deep and high tones, and ask me, wav ing his hands:

"'Why does he sit with me? Wha does he want? He sits there looking a nothing.'

"He also nick-named Bielikov, 'A Chinese Spider.' So, of course, we los no time in informing him that his siste Varinka was thinking of marrying th 'Chinese Spider.' One day, the director wife remarked to him, that it would b a very good thing to see his sister ma ried to such a staid and so universall esteemed man as Bielikov was. H frowned, and muttered:

"'It's not my business. She ca marry a reptile if she likes; I don't lik interfering with other people.'

"Now, listen what happened nex Some wretch drew a caricature Bielikov in galoshes, home-spun trouser holding up his umbrella, and arm-i arm with Varinka; beneath was the i scription, 'the enamored *anthropos* The resemblance was remarkable an exact. It was not the work either a single night, for all the teachers in th school, male and female, the teache in the seminary, the functionaries, eac received a copy. Bielikov, too, receive one. The caricature made a most pai ful impression on him.

"We left the house together—it ha pened to be the first of May, a Sunda and all of us, teachers and pupils, ha agreed to meet at the school, and th all go together on foot, out of the tow into the woods. We started out; greener, gloomier than any cloud.

"'How bad and wicked some peop are!' he began, with quivering lips.

"I at once felt sorry for him. walked on, when suddenly, imagi Kovalenko rides by on a bicycle, and

hind him Varinka, red and perspiring, but cheerful and happy, also on a bicycle!

" 'We are going ahead,' she called out. 'Oh, such glorious weather—so awfully glorious!' And they were both soon out of sight. Poor Bielikov from green turned white, and seemed turned to stone, he stood still and looked at me.

" 'But I ask you, what is this?' he asked. 'Did my eyesight deceive me, or is it proper for school-teachers and women to ride bicycles?'

" 'What is there improper in that?' I asked. It's very good for their health.'

" 'But it is impossible,' he cried, horrified at my calm. 'What are you saying?'

"He was so upset that he could not go any farther, and went back home.

"The next day, he was all the time nervously rubbing his hands together, having shivers, and looked very far from well. He shirked part of his work, a thing which happened for the first time in his life. He had no supper. Towards evening he put on warmer clothes than ever, although it was quite summer weather outside, and directed his steps towards the Kovalenkos' house. Varinka was not at home, he only found her brother.

" 'Pray, take a seat,' Kovalenko said coldly, and with a frown. He was still half asleep; he had just rested after his dinner, and felt in a very bad temper.

"Bielikov sat down, remained silent for ten minutes, then began:

" 'I have come to you so as to relieve my mind. I am very, very much upset. Some lampooner, with intent to ridicule, has drawn myself and another person in very close proximity. I consider it my duty to assure you that I am in no way responsible for it. I gave no occasion for such pleasantry; on the contrary, I have behaved all the time like a perfectly respectable man.'

"Kovalenko sat sulking in silence. Bielikov waited a little, then continued quietly in a pained voice:

" 'And I have something else to tell you. I am nearing the end of my work, whereas you are only just at the beginning of yours, and I consider it my duty, as an elder colleague, to give you a warning. You ride a bicycle, and that is a recreation quite unsuitable to an instructor of youth.'

" 'And why?' in a deep voice, inquired Kovalenko.

" 'Is there anything to explain, Michael Savitch? Is it not quite clear? If the teachers ride bicycles, what is there left for the pupils? Nothing is left for them except to walk on their heads! It must be forbidden at once by a circular. I was horrified yesterday! When I saw your sister, my head seemed to swim. A woman or a girl on a bicycle—it's awful!'

" 'What is it you want?'

" 'I want only one thing—that is to warn you, Michael Savitch. You are a young man, and the future is before you; you must be very, very careful, you are in default so often—oh, so very often! You go about in a peasant shirt, walk about the streets with bundles of books, and now, in addition, you ride a bicycle. The director will know that you and your sister ride a bicycle, then it will reach the ears of the curator. . . . That will be nice, won't it?'

" 'That my sister and I ride a bicycle is nobody's business,' said Kovalenko, crimson with rage, 'and whoever inter-

feres with my family or private affairs I will send to the devil!'

"Bielikov turned pale, and rose from his chair.

"'If you speak to me in that tone, I cannot continue,' said he, 'and I beg you never to express yourself thus about our superiors in my presence. You must be respectful to the authorities.'

"'And did I say anything against the authorities?" asked Kovalenko, looking angrily at him. 'You will please leave me alone. I am a respectable man, and I do not wish to have any conversation with such a fellow as you. I do not care about spies!'

"Bielikov began to fuss nervously, and put on his things quickly, with an expression of horror on his face, for this was the first time in his life he had been subjected to such rudeness.

"'You may say what you like,' he said, going out of the door on to the little landing of the staircase, 'but I must warn you that perhaps our conversation has been overheard, so to prevent any misunderstanding and anything happening, I shall have to report the outstanding features of it to the director. That I must do!'

"'Report it? Get out with you, informer!'

"Kovalenko seized him behind by the collar and gave him a shove, and Bielikov slid down the stairs with a sound of rubbing galoshes. The staircase was long and steep, but he arrived safely at the bottom, stood up, and felt his nose to see if his eye-glasses were unbroken. But just as he was sliding down the stairs, Varinka appeared, with two ladies, and they stood there watching him; this was more dreadful than anything for Bielikov. He felt it would have been better to have broken his neck and both legs than to be ridiculous, for now the whole town would hear of it, it would reach the director's ears, and the curator's. Ah! whatever would come of it? There would be another caricature drawn, and it would end by an order for him to retire.

"When he stood up, Varinka recognized him, and as she looked at his funny face, crumpled coat, and his galoshes, not grasping the situation, but inferring that he himself had fallen unintentionally, could not restrain her laughter, which went ringing through the whole house:

"'Ha, ha, ha!'

"And this loud rippling 'Ha, ha, ha!' put an end to everything: Bielikov's marriage and his terrestrial existence. He no longer heard what Varinka was saying, nor did he see anything further. He returned to his rooms, first of all removed the photograph from his table, then lay down on his bed, not to rise again.

"At the end of three days Athanasius came to me, and asked if it were necessary to send for the doctor, as there was something very wrong with his master. I went to see Bielikov. He lay behind the bed curtains, all covered up, and spoke not a word. If he was asked a question he merely answered Yes or No, and nothing further. He lay there while Athanasius hovered around, frowning, looking gloomy, heaving deep sighs, and smelling of vodka, like a tavern.

"At the end of a month Bielikov died. We all, that is, both schools and the seminary, went to his funeral. And now that he lay in his coffin, his expression was peaceful, contented, even cheerful,

just as if he were pleased that, at last, he lay in a sheath out of which he would never more be taken. Yes, he had attained his ideal! And as if in honor of him during his funeral the weather was overcast and rainy, so we all wore galoshes, and held up our umbrellas. Varinka was also at the funeral, and when they lowered the coffin into the grave, she cried a little.

"I have noticed that the Little Russians only cry or laugh—there is no middle mood with them. I confess, that to bury such people as Bielikov gives one the greatest satisfaction. As we returned from the cemetery our faces wore discreet, penitential expressions, no one wished to manifest that feeling of satisfaction, a feeling akin to that which we experienced long, long ago as children, when the elders left the house, and we ran about the garden hour after hour, rejoicing in our untrammeled freedom. Ah, freedom! freedom! Even an illusion of it, even the faintest hope of its possibility gives wings to the soul. Isn't it so?

"We returned from the cemetery in good humor. But hardly more than a week had elapsed before our life was stagnating as before—just as austere, depressing, unintelligible; a life not restricted by circulars, but not solved in any way. And how many more of such people in husks remained, how many others there will be!"

"That's just it," said Ivan Ivanitch, smoking his pipe.

"How many others there will be!" repeated Burkin.

The school-teacher came out of the shed. He was a man of middle height, stout, quite bald, with a black beard almost to his waist; and two dogs followed him out.

"A moon, what a moon!" he said, looking up. It was midnight. On the right was seen the whole village, a long street stretching far away, about five versts. It lay plunged in a soft deep sleep; no movement, no sound, it hardly seemed credible that nature could lie so still. When, on a moonlit night, one sees the wide street of a village, its cottages, haystacks, slumbering willows, one's soul is quieted; for, in this its peace, in this withdrawing from labor, anxiety and sorrow in the shades of the night, it is placid, beautiful, sad. It seems as if the stars were looking at it fondly and tenderly, and that there is no more evil on earth, and all is well. To the left, where the village ended, the field began. It could be seen as far as the horizon, and in the whole length and breadth of this field, bathed in moonlight, there was no movement nor sound either.

"That's just it," repeated Ivan Ivanitch. "But do we not live in towns, are we not stifled and crowded, read useless papers, play vint—is not that a husk? And since we spend all our lives among good-for-nothings, squabblers, fools, idle women, talk and listen to all sorts of nonsense, is not that a husk? Now, if you like, I will tell you a most instructive story."

"No, it's time to go to sleep," answered Burkin. "Tell it tomorrow."

They both went into the shed and lay down on the hay. They had both covered themselves over and were dozing off, when of a sudden were heard some light footsteps, tup, tup . . . someone was walking close to the shed;

they came nearer, then stopped; in a moment, again, tup, tup. . . . The dogs barked.

"That is Mavra," said Burkin.

The sound of steps ceased.

"To see and hear them tell lies," slowly said Ivan Ivanitch, turning over on his other side, "while they call you a fool because you suffer them to lie; to endure offenses and humiliations; not to have the courage openly to declare that you are on the side of honest, free men, but to lie yourself, and smile, and all that for a crust of bread, a warm little nook, some little decoration or other, the value of which is no more than a groat—no, to live on like that is not possible!"

"Come now, that is another subject, Ivan Ivanitch," said the teacher. "Let's sleep."

And in ten minutes Burkin was asleep. But Ivan Ivanitch turned over from one side to the other, and sighed; then he got up, went outside, and, seating himself by the door, smoked his pipe.

Anna Round the Neck

CHAPTER I

THE YOUNG COUPLE

After the wedding no refreshments were served. The young couple had each a glass of wine, dressed and drove to the station. Instead of music and dancing—a journey of two hundred versts to pray at a sacred shrine. Many people approved saying, that for Modestus Alekseich, an official of high rank and aged, a noisy wedding might appear out of place; it was tiresome to listen to music when a bureaucrat of fifty-two got married to a girl of just eighteen years. It was also said that Modestus Alekseich, a man of principles, had really arranged this journey to a monastery in order to make his young wife understand that, even in matrimony, he desired religion and morality.

The young couple were escorted to the station by a crowd of colleagues and relations with champagne glasses in their hands, waiting for the train to start in order to shout: "Hurrah!" and Pëtr Leontich, the bride's father, in a top-hat and a schoolmaster's dress-coat, already drunk and very pale, stretched towards the window, his glass in his hand, and said in a beseeching voice:

"Anuta! Anya! Anya, just one word!"

Anya bent out of the window towards him, and he whispered something to her, pouring out on her a strong smell of brandy, and blowing into her ear—but nothing could be understood—he made the sign of the cross over her face, breast and hands; his breathing shook and tears shone in his eyes. Anya's brothers, Petya and Andryusha, gymnasium boys, pulled him from behind by his coat-tails and whispered shamefacedly:

"Papochka, enough! . . . Papochka, don't! . . ."

When the train started, Anya saw her father run a few steps after the coach, with unsteady gait and spilling his wine. What a pitiful, kind and guilty face he had!

"Hur-rah!—ah!" he shouted.

The young couple remained alone. Modestus Alekseich looked round the compartment, arranged their things in the racks and then sat down opposite his young wife, smiling. He was an official of middle height, somewhat stout, puffy and very well-fed, with long whiskers, but no moustache, and his round shaven, sharply outlined chin resembled a heel. The most characteristic trait of his face was the absence of a moustache, and this freshly shaven, bare place gradually merged into fat cheeks that trembled like jellies. His demeanour was sedate, his movements slow, his manner suave.

"At this moment I can't help remembering a certain circumstance," he said, smiling. "Five years ago when Kosorotov received the order of Saint Anna of the second class and came to

thank for it His Excellency expressed himself thus: 'Consequently you now have three annas: one in your buttonhole and two round your neck.' And I must tell you that just at that time Kosorotov's wife, a very quarrelsome and giddy woman, who was celled Anna, had just returned to him. I trust, when I receive Anna of the second class, His Excellency will have no cause to say the same thing to me."

He smiled with his small eyes. And she also smiled, being troubled at the thought that at any moment this man might kiss her with his full, moist lips, and that now she had not the right to refuse to be kissed. The sleek movements of his bloated body frightened her, she felt terrified and disgusted. He rose, slowly took off his orders, his dress-coat and waistcoat and put on his dressing-gown.

"That's all right," he said, sitting down next to Anya.

She remembered how painful the marriage ceremony had been, when it had appeared to her that the priest, the guests and all the people who were in the church looked at her sadly; why, why had she, such a pretty, nice girl, married this elderly, uninteresting gentleman? That morning she had still been in raptures that everything had been settled so well; but during the marriage ceremony and now, while sitting in the railway coach, she felt culpable, deceived and ridiculous. Now she was married to a rich man, and still she had no money, her bridal dress had been made on credit, and to-day, when her father and brothers had seen her off, she had perceived by their faces that they had not a kopeck in their pockets. Would they have any supper to-day? And to-morrow? And now for some reason she seemed to see her father and the boys sitting hungry and experiencing the same sadness as they felt the first evening after her mother's funeral.

"Oh, how unhappy I am!" she thought. "Why am I so unhappy?"

With the awkwardness of a sedate man who is unaccustomed to the treatment of women, Modestus Alekseich put his arm round her waist and patted her on the shoulders, and she thought of money, of her mother and of her death. When her mother died, her father, Pëtr Leontich, a teacher of calligraphy and drawing in the gymnasium, took to drinking, and they began to feel want; the boys had no boots or galoshes, their father was summoned before the magistrate, there was an execution in their flat and an inventory was made of their furniture. . . . What shame! Anya had to look after her drunken father, darn her brothers' stockings, go to market, and when her beauty, youth and elegant manners were admired, it appeared to her that the whole world saw her cheap hat and the hole in her shoes that was smeared with ink. At night there were tears and troublesome thoughts that she could not get rid of, the dread that very soon, owing to his weakness, her father would be dismissed from the gymnasium, and that he would not be able to endure this and would die like her mother. But then some ladies of their acquaintance had begun to take an interest in her and to look out for a good husband for her. Very soon Modestus Alekseich had been found; he was neither young nor handsome, but he had money. He had about a hundred thousand roubles in the bank

and he owned a patrimonial estate which he had leased to somebody. He was a man of principles, and he was in His Excellency's good books; it would be quite easy for him, Anya was told, to get a note from His Excellency to the director of the gymnasium, or even to the curator, with instructions that Pëtr Leontich was not to be dismissed. . . .

While she was thinking of all these details the sound of music and the noise of voices suddenly burst through the window. The train had stopped at a small wayside station. Beyond the platform somebody in the crowd who was playing gaily on an accordion, accompanied by a cheap squeaking fiddle, and from the other side of the tall birches and poplars, from the country houses which were flooded with moonlight came the sounds of a military band: there was a ball in one of them. Crowds of the inhabitants and people from town, who had come down to breathe the pure air, were walking about the platform. Among others was Artynov, the owner of this country resort and a very rich man. He was tall, stout and dark-haired, with the face of an Armenian and goggle eyes, and he was dressed in a strange costume. He wore a Russian shirt which was unbuttoned on the chest, top-boots with spurs, and a long mantle that hung from his shoulders and trailed on the ground like a train. Following him were two large greyhounds, with their sharp muzzles hanging low.

Tears still glistened in Anya's eyes, but she no longer remembered her mother, nor money, nor her wedding; she was pressing the hands of some gymnasium boys and officers, old acquaintances of hers, laughing gaily and saying quickly:

"How do you do! How are you?"

She went out on to the platform, into the moonlight, and stood there in such a way that everybody could see her in her magnificent new dress and hat.

"Why are we standing here?" she asked.

"This is a siding," she was answered. "The post train is expected."

Noticing that Artynov was looking at her, she half closed her eyes coquettishly and began to speak French in a loud voice, and because her own voice sounded so well, because music was heard and the moon was reflected in the pond, because Artynov, that well-known Don Juan and rake, was looking at her covetously, and because all were gay she suddenly felt happy. When the train started again and her friends the officers had saluted her as she left, she began to hum the polka, the sounds of which played by the military band somewhere behind the trees was wafted after her; she returned to her compartment with a feeling as if she had been convinced at this wayside station that she certainly would be happy despite everything.

The young couple remained in the monastery two days, and then they returned to town. Their flat was in a house belonging to the Crown. When Modestus Alekseich went to his office Anya played on the piano, or cried because she was dull, or lay down on the couch and read novels or looked through fashion magazines. At dinner Modestus Alekseich ate very much and talked about politics, about new appointments, promotions and gratuities, about its being necessary to work hard; about family life not being a pleasure, but a duty; he said that if you took care of the kopecks the roubles would take care

of themselves, and that he placed religion and morality above everything else on earth. And holding his knife in his fist like a sword, he said:

"Every man must have his duties!"

Anya listened to him, was afraid and could not eat, and she usually rose from table hungry. After dinner her husband rested and snored loudly, and she went over to see her people. Her father and the boys looked at her in quite a strange manner; exactly as if just before she had come they had been blaming her for having married for money an unloved, unpleasant and tiresome man; her rustling dress, bracelets and, in general, her ladylike appearance embarrassed and offended them; in her presence they were a little confused and did not know what to say to her. She sat down and ate with them their cabbage soup, stiff gruel and potatoes fried in mutton dripping that smelt of tallow candles. With a trembling hand Pëtr Leontich took up a decanter and filled his glass, which he drank off quickly, with greediness, with repulsion, then he drank another and a third. . . . Petya and Andryusha, thin, pale little boys, with large eyes, took the decanter away, and said in an abashed voice:

"Don't, Papochka. . . . Enough, Papochka. . . ."

Anya, too, was troubled and implored him not to drink any more; but he suddenly flew out at them and thrumped the table with his fist.

"I won't allow anybody to look after me!" he shouted. "Youngsters, girl, I will turn you all out."

But in his voice there could be heard weakness and goodness, and nobody was afraid of him. After dinner he usually made himself smart: with a pale face and a chin that had been cut when shaving; stretching out his thin neck he would stand for half an hour before the mirror, trying to improve his appearance, now by combing his hair, or by twisting his black moustache, or by sprinkling himself with scents and carefully tying his cravat in a bow; and then he put on his gloves, took his silk hat and went out to give private lessons. But if it was a holiday he remained at home and either painted or played on a harmonium, which hissed and wheezed; he tried to draw from it harmonious and melodious tones, and sang in a low voice, or he was angry with the boys.

"Young scamps! Villains, they have spoilt the instrument!"

Of an evening Anya's husband played cards with those of his colleagues, who lived under the same roof in the house belonging to the Crown. During these card parties the wives of the officials also met; they were ugly, tastelessly dressed and as coarse as cooks, and then in their flats there began gossip and scandal that was as ugly and tasteless as they were themselves. It also happened that Modestus Alekseich took Anya to the theatre.

During the intervals he did not let her go from his side for a moment, but walked about the passages and the foyer arm in arm with her. When he bowed to anybody he whispered to Anya: "A councillor of State . . . received by His Excellency," or: "With a fortune . . . he has his own house. . . ." When they passed through the refreshment-room Anya wanted very much something sweet; she was very fond of chocolates and apple tarts, but she had no money, and she was afraid to ask her husband. He would take up a pea

and press it with his fingers in an undecided way and ask:

"What is the price?"

"Twenty-five kopecks."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, putting the pear in its place; but as it was awkward to go away from the buffet without buying something he ordered a bottle of soda water and finished the whole bottle himself, while tears appeared in his eyes and Anya hated him at that moment.

Or suddenly he would get quite red and say to her hurriedly:

"Bow to that old lady!"

"But I am not acquainted with her."

"All the same. She is the wife of the Director of the Court of Exchequer! Don't you hear, I tell you to bow!" he grumbled insistently. "Your head won't fall off."

Anya bowed, and her head really did not fall off, but it was painful. She did everything her husband required, and was angry with herself that he had duped her like the veriest little fool. She had married him only for money, and now she had even less than before her marriage. Formerly her father would give her from time to time a twenty-kopeck piece, but now she never had a grosh. She could not take it by stealth, nor ask for money; she was afraid of her husband and trembled before him. It appeared to her that she had borne the fear of this man in her soul for very long. At one time in her childhood the power that appeared to her the most terrible and inspired the greatest fear was the director of the gymnasium, who seemed to approach like a cloud or a steam engine ready to crush her; another similar power about which they often talked in the family, and which for some reason they feared, was His Excellency; there were besides some dozen other powers, though smaller ones, and among them were the teachers of the gymnasium, with their shaven moustaches, strict, inexorable, and now at last there was Modestus Alekseich, a man with principles, who even in face resembled the director. In Anya's imagination all these powers were blended in one, in the form of a terrible, huge, white bear that moved towards the weak and guilty people, like her father, and she feared to say anything in contradiction to him; but with a forced smile and expression of feigned pleasure she suffered his coarse caresses and defiling embraces that only caused her horror.

Only once Pëtr Leontich had ventured to ask him for a loan of fifty roubles in order to settle a very unpleasant debt, but what suffering it had caused!

"Very well, I will give it," Modestus Alekseich had said after reflection, "but I warn you that I will never again help you until you leave off drinking. Such a weakness is shameful for a man who is in government employ. I cannot refrain from reminding you of the universally known fact that many very capable men have been ruined by this vice, while by temperance they might perhaps, in time have attained high rank."

This was followed by long periods: "according as . . ." "in consequence of this state . . ." "in consideration of what has been said." Poor Pëtr Leontich suffered from the humiliation, and felt a strong desire to drink.

The boys, too, who came to see Anya usually in torn boots and threadbare trousers, had also to listen to precepts.

"Every man must have his duties!" Modestus Alekseich told them.

But he gave them no money. At the same time he gave Anya rings, bracelets, and brooches, saying it was as well to have these things for a black day. And he often opened her chest of drawers to verify if all these things were safe.

CHAPTER II

THE BALL

MEANWHILE winter had begun. Long before Christmas the local newspapers announced that the usual winter ball would "be given" on the 29th of December in the Hall of the Nobility Club. Every evening when the card-playing was over Modestus Alekseich whispered excitedly with the wives of the officials, looking anxiously at Anya, and afterwards he paced the room from corner to corner for a long time immersed in thought. At last, late at night, he stopped before Anya and said:

"You must have a ball dress made for yourself. Do you understand? But, please, consult Marya Grigorevna and Natalya Kuzminishna."

And he gave her a hundred roubles. She took the money; but when she ordered her dress she did not consult anybody; she only spoke to her father about it, and tried to imagine how her mother would have dressed for the ball. Her late mother had always been dressed in the last fashion, and had always taken great pains with Anya and had dressed her very elegantly—like a doll—and she had taught her to speak French and to dance the mazurka admirably (before she had got married she had been a governess for five years). Like her mother Anya could make a new dress out of an old one, clean her gloves with benzene, hire jewellery for the evening, and, like her mother, she also knew how to screw up her eyes, burr, get into pretty poses, become enraptured when necessary, or look sad and enigmatic. And from her father she had inherited her dark hair and eyes, her nervousness and her habit of always dressing very carefully.

When Modestus Alekseich, without his coat, came into her room half an hour before they had to start for the ball, in order to fix his order round his neck in front of her pier-glass, he was so enchanted with her beauty and the elegance of her fresh and airy toilette that he combed his whiskers with self-satisfaction, saying:

"So that's how my wife is . . . that's how you are! Anyuta!" he continued, suddenly falling into a solemn tone. "I have made you happy, and to-day you can make me happy. I beg you to get introduced to His Excellency's wife! For God's sake do! Through her I can get the post of first secretary!"

They drove to the ball. Here they were at the Hall of the Nobility at the entrance door with its doorkeeper. The antechamber was full of clothes-pegs, fur coats, sleeping lackeys and bare-necked women, covering themselves with their fans as a protection from the draught; there was a smell of gas and soldiers. When going up the staircase on her husband's arm, Anya heard the sounds of music and saw the reflection of the whole of herself in the huge mirror illuminated by numberless lights, a feeling of joy, and the same presentiment of happiness that she had felt on the

moonlit night at the wayside station, awoke in her soul. She walked proudly, with self-confidence, for the first time she felt herself no longer a girl but a married lady, and involuntarily she imitated her late mother in her gait and manner. And for the first time in her life she felt herself rich and free. Even the presence of her husband did not embarrass her, as from the moment she crossed the threshold of the Club she guessed instinctively that the vicinity of her old husband would in no way depreciate her; but, on the contrary, it would stamp her with the piquant mysteriousness that is very attractive to men. The band already resounded in the large hall, and dancing had begun. After their apartments in the government house Anya was bewildered by the impressions of light, of many colours, of music and of noise. She cast a glance over the hall, thinking: "Oh, how delightful!" and she instantly spotted all her friends amid the crowd, all those people she had met formerly at parties or on her promenades, all those officers, teachers, lawyers, officials, landowners, His Excellency, Artynov and the society ladies smartly decked out and very *décolletée*, both the pretty and the ugly, who were already taking their places in the kiosks and pavilions of the Charity Bazaar, to begin the sale for the poor. A huge officer in epaulettes—she had made his acquaintance in the Old Kiev Street when she was still a gymnasium girl and now she could not even recall his name—appeared before her as if he had sprung out of the earth and invited her for a waltz, and she flew away from her husband. It seemed to her as if she were sailing in a boat in a severe storm, and her husband had remained far away on the bank. . . . She was a passionate dancer, she danced with enthusiasm waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, passing from hand to hand, becoming dizzy from the music and the noise, mixing up French and Russian words, burring, laughing, not thinking of her husband nor of anybody nor of anything. She had success with the men; that was quite evident—it could not have been otherwise—she was breathless with excitement, she pressed her fan convulsively in her hand and wanted to drink. Her father, in a crumpled dresscoat which exhaled an odour of benzene, came up, offering her a plate with a red ice in his outstretched hand.

"You are bewitching to-day," he said, looking at her enraptured; "never before have I regretted so much that you married with so much haste. . . . Why? I know you did it for our sake, but . . ." with trembling hands he took a packet of rouble notes out of his pocket and said: "To-day I received my fee for lessons, I can repay your husband my debt."

She thrust her plate into his hand and, seized by somebody, she was carried off, and he had a glimpse of her far away, while she, looking over her partner's shoulder, saw her father gliding over the floor with his arm round a lady's waist and twirling with her through the room.

"How charming he is when he is sober!" she thought.

She danced the mazurka with the same huge officer. Walking along in an important and heavy manner, looking like a carcass in uniform, slightly leading with raised shoulders and expanded breast, and hardly stamping with his feet, he appeared very unwilling to dance, while she fluttered beside him ex-

citing him with her beauty and bare neck; her eyes shone provokingly, her movements were passionate, while he became more and more indifferent and stretched out his hand to her graciously like a king.

"Bravo! Bravo!" the public shouted.

Little by little the huge officer was also carried away; he became animated, excited; he succumbed to the enchantment, he was carried away and moved lightly, youthfully, while she only shrugged her shoulders and looked slyly at him, as if now she were the queen and he her slave, and at that moment it seemed to her that the whole hall was looking at them, that all the people were spellbound and envied them. The huge officer had scarcely had time to thank her, when the people around suddenly made way and the men held themselves up stiffly in a strange manner and let their arms fall to their sides. It was His Excellency, in a dress-coat, with two stars on his breast, who was coming towards her. Yes, His Excellency was really coming to her, because he looked straight at her and smiled sweetly, at the same time chewing his lips, as he always did when he saw a pretty woman.

"Very pleased, very pleased . . ." he began. "I shall order your husband to be put under arrest in the guardhouse for having hidden away such a treasure from us for so long. I have come to you with a commission from my wife," he continued, giving her his hand. "You must help us. H'm-m, yes, we must award you the prize of beauty . . . as they do in America. . . . H'm-m. . . . The Americans. . . . My wife is waiting for you with impatience."

He led her to one of the huts, to an elderly lady who had a face in which the lower part was disproportionately large, so that it looked as if she had a big stone in her mouth.

"Help us," she said through the nose in a drawling voice. "All the pretty women are working for the Charity Bazaar, but for some reason you alone are amusing yourself. Why don't you want to help us?"

She went away and Anya took her place near the silver samovar and the teacups. Brisk trade began at once. Anya took not less than a rouble for a cup of tea, and she made the huge officer drink three cups. Artynov, the rich man with the goggle eyes, came up to her stall. He was suffering from breathlessness, but he no longer wore the strange costume in which Anya had seen him in the summer; he was now in evening dress, like all the other men. Without removing his eyes from Anya he drank a glass of champagne and paid a hundred roubles for it, then he had a cup of tea and gave another hundred, and all this was done in silence, as he was suffering from asthma. Anya invited purchasers to come in, and she took their money from them, being firmly convinced that her smiles and glances could afford these men nothing but great pleasure. She already understood that she was created solely for this noisy, brilliant, laughing life with music, dancing, admirers, and her former fear, of the power that was approaching and threatened to crush her, appeared to her absurd; she feared nobody any longer, and she only regretted that her mother was not there to rejoice with her at her success.

Pëtr Leontich, already pale, but still firm on his legs, came to the hut and

asked for a glass of cognac. Anya blushed, fearing he would say something unsuitable (she was already ashamed that she had such a poor, such an ordinary father); but he emptied his glass, threw a ten-rouble note, which he took from his pocket, on to the counter and went away in an important manner, without having said a word. A little later she saw him with his partner dancing in the *grand rond,* and now he was rather tottery and was calling out something, to the great confusion of his partner, and Anya remembered at a ball, that had taken place three years before, he had also tottered and had called out in the same way; it had finished by the policeman having to take him home to bed, and the next day the Director had threatened to dismiss him. How untimely were these recollections!

When the fires of the samovars had gone out in the huts, and the weary benefactresses had handed over their receipts to the elderly lady with the stone in her mouth, Artynov gave his arm to Anya and led her into the hall, where supper was served for all who had taken part in the Charity Bazaar. There were about twenty people at the supper, hardly more, but it was very noisy. His Excellency proposed the toast: "This luxurious dining-room is the right place to drink to the prosperity of the cheap dining-rooms that are the object of to-day's Bazaar." The Brigadier-General proposed that they should drink "to the power before which even the artillery is powerless," and everybody rose to click glasses with the ladies. It was very, very gay! . . .

The sky was already getting light when Anya was escorted home, and the cooks were going to market. Joyous, intoxicated, full of new impressions and tired out she undressed, fell on her bed and was instantly fast asleep. . . .

It was past one next day when her maid woke ner and announced that Mr. Artynox had come to pay her a visit. She dressed quickly and went into the drawing-room. Soon after Artynov left, His Excellency arrived to thank her for having taken part in the Charity Bazaar. He looked at her sweetly, chewing his lips, kissed her little hand, asked permission to come again and departed, and she stood in the middle of the drawing-room amazed and enchanted, unable to believe in this change in her life, this wonderful change had taken place so quickly; at that very moment her husband, Modestus Alekseich, came into the room. . . . And he, too, stood before her now with that ingratiating, slavishly respectful expression, which she was accustomed to see on his face in the presence of the strong and the illustrious; and with rapture, with indignation, with contempt, already confident that she would not have to suffer for it, she said, pronouncing each word distinctly:

"Go away, blockhead!"

After that Anya never had a single free day, as she took part in picnics, drives and plays. Every day she only returned home towards morning, and lay down in the drawing-room on the floor, and then she told everybody touchingly that she slept under flowers. She required very much money now, but she was no longer afraid of Modestus Alekseich, and she spent his money as if it were her own; she did not ask, or demand, she simply sent him her bills or little notes: "pay the bearer

two hundred roubles" or "pay immediately a hundred roubles."

At Easter Modestus Alekseich received the order of St. Anna of the second class. When he went to thank for it, His Excellency put his newspaper aside and sit down deeper into his armchair.

"Consequently, you have now three Annas," he said as he looked at his white hands and pink nails, "one in your buttonhole and two round your neck."

Out of caution Modestus Alekseich put two fingers to his lips, in order not to laugh aloud, and said:

"Now it only remains to await the appearance of a little Vladimir in the world. May I venture to ask Your Excellency to be godfather."

He hinted at a Vladimir of the fourth class, and he already imagined how he would relate everywhere to his friends this joke that was so successful by its ready wit and boldness, and he was preparing to say something equally good, but His Excellency was again entirely absorbed in his newspaper and only nodded his head.

And Anya was always driving about with three horses, she went with Artynov to his shooting-box, she took part in one-act plays, she was at supper-parties; but she went more and more seldom to her own people. They always dined alone now. Pëtr Leontich drank more than formerly; he had no money, and long since the harmonium had been sold for debt. Now the boys never allowed him to go alone into the street, and always followed him, to save him from falling. When it happened that Anya flew past them in the Old Kiev Street, driving with a pair of horses and a side-horse and Artynov on the coach-box instead of a coachman, Pëtr Leontich would take off his top-hat and when about to call to her, Petya and Andryusha would seize him by the arms, and say:

"Don't, Papochka! Enough, Papochka!"

The Incubus

No sooner had Kunin, a young man of thirty, and life-member of the Peasant's Government Board, returned from Petersburg to his estate of Borissov, than he sent a horseman in all haste to Father Jacob Smirnov, the then Priest of Sinkino.

About five hours later Father Jacob appeared.

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance," said Kunin, coming out to greet him in the vestibule. "As I have been living and working here a year, it is time we came to know each other. Welcome. But how young you look!" said Kunin in surprise; "how old are you?"

"Twenty-eight . . ." answered Father Jacob, giving a very slight pressure to the hand held out to him, and blushing, he knew not why. Kunin led his guest into his sitting-room, and took a look at him.

"What a coarse, womanish face," he thought.

Father Jacob's face was certainly of

a very womanish type, with its snub-nose, fat, bright red cheeks, gray-blue eyes, and his scant, faintly marked eyebrows. His hair was long, red, smooth, and dry, and hung down to his shoulders like strands of grass. His moustache was just sprouting into the resemblance of a man's moustache, whereas his beard belonged to that class of good-for-nothing beard, which the Seminarists for some reason call "demivolte." It was scarce and transparent; it would be impossible to smooth or comb such a beard, but it might be snipped now and again. All this scanty vegetation grew in very uneven clumps, just as if Father Jacob, having thought he would disguise himself as a priest, had begun to glue on a beard and had been interrupted halfway through. He wore a cassock the color of coffee diluted with chicory, and it had two large patches at the elbows.

"What a strange being," thought Kunin, looking at the very mud-stained cassock. "He comes into the house for the first time in his life, and can't even dress himself tidily."

"Take a seat, batushka," he began, familiarly rather than affably, and drawing a chair up to the table. "Take a seat, pray!"

Father Jacob coughed into his hand, seated himself awkwardly on the edge of the armchair, and rested both his hands on his knees. He was small, narrow-shouldered, with a perspiring red face; Kunin had never imagined before that such a wanting, pitiable-looking priest could exist in Russia. As Father Jacob sat there on the arm of the chair, his whole attitude, with his palms resting on his knees, seemed to reveal a complete absence of dignity, and even something equivocal, and from the first produced on Kunin the very worst impression.

"I invited you, batushka, on business," Kunin began, leaning back in his chair. "To my lot has fallen the pleasant obligation of helping you in one of your useful enterprises. The fact is, on my return from Petersburg, I found a letter from the Mareschal on my table. Egor Dmitritch proposes that I should take over the guardianship of the parish church school which is just being opened at Sinkino. I am delighted, batushka, whole-heartedly so—nay more, I seize this opportunity with enthusiasm."

Kunin got up, and walked about the room.

"Of course, Egor Dmitrich, and probably you, know I have not much money at my disposal. My estate is mortgaged, and I live entirely on my pay as life-member of the Board, so that you cannot reckon on great help, but whatever is in my power I will do. What do you think of opening the school, batushka?"

"When there is the money," answered Father Jacob.

"What means are at present at your disposal?"

"Hardly any. The moujiks decided at their meeting that thirty kopeks should be paid yearly for every male; but that is only promised. To provide the bare necessities we want to start with at least two hundred roubles."

"M—yes. Unfortunately I have not that amount at present," sighed Kunin. "I spent it all on the journey. I even owe a little. Let us give all our attention to finding some way."

Kunin began to think aloud. As he gave rein to his reflections, he followed the expression on Father Jacob's face.

seeking for approval or consent, but the face remained impassive and immovable, and expressed nothing but shamefaced timidity and uneasiness. You might think, looking at him, that Kunin was speaking such words of wisdom that Father Jacob could not understand them, was only listening out of politeness, and besides, was afraid lest he should be convicted later of not comprehending.

"The little fellow is obviously not of the brightest," thought Kunin. "Timid and dull beyond measure."

Father Jacob only showed a little animation and broke into a smile when the servant came into the room with a tray, two glasses of tea, and a plate full of cracknels. He took his glass, and at once began to drink his tea.

"Why should not we write to his Eminence?" said Kunin, continuing his reflections aloud. "For properly speaking, it is not the zemstvo, nor us, but the superior spiritual authorities who raised the question of parish church schools. They ought, in reality, to find the money. I remember, I read somewhere that there was a sum of money allotted for that purpose. Do you know anything of it?"

Father Jacob was so busy drinking his tea that he was unable to answer this question at once. He raised his gray-blue eyes on Kunin, thought a moment, then, as if just remembering he had been asked something, made a negative sign of the head. An expression of satisfaction and of the most ordinary and prosaic hunger appeared on his ugly face, and spread from ear to ear. He drank, and gulped, and smacked his lips. When he had finished the very last drop, he put down his glass on the table, took it up again, looked in the bottom, and replaced it on the table; the expression of satisfaction faded from his face. Then Kunin saw his guest take a cracknel from the biscuit plate, bit it, turn it round in his hand, then swiftly slip it into his pocket.

"This is not very sacerdotal," thought Kunin, contemptuously shrugging his shoulders. "What is it? priestly greed or puerility?"

Having given his guest another glass of tea, and having seen him off from the vestibule, Kunin stretched himself on the sofa, and yielded to the unpleasant feeling with which Father Jacob's visit had affected him.

"What a strange uncivilized man," he thought. "Dirty, slovenly, rude, stupid, and a drunkard undoubtedly. My God, and he is a priest, a spiritual father! An instructor of the people! Just imagine the irony in the deacon's voice as he intones to him at every Mass: 'Give us thy blessing.' A fine superior! Without one drop of dignity, uneducated, secreting biscuits in his pockets like a school-boy—Phew! Good Lord, where were the eyes of the Prelate when he ordained such a man? What do they expect of the people when they give them such instructors? One wants men who. . . ."

Here Kunin thought a little what the Russian priest ought to be like.

"Say, for instance, I was pope. An educated man, liking his duties of pope, could do a great deal; I should have had the school opened long before this. And the sermons? If the pope is only sincere and inspired with love for his work, what wonderful rousing sermons he can deliver!"

Kunin closed his eyes, and mentally composed a sermon.

A little later he was sitting at the table quickly writing it down:

"I will give it to carroty-hair, he can read it in church," he thought.

The following Sunday, Kunin went over in the morning to Sinkino to settle the question of the school, and at the same time to get to know the church of which he was considered a parishioner. It was a beautiful morning, although it was the season of bad roads; the sun was shining and darting its rays into the white layers of lingering snow; the snow, as it took its leave of the earth, glistened with such bright jewels that it dazzled one to look at it; and the winter-corn was growing green through it all. The rooks were sedately hovering over the earth, then one descended, and before settling himself on his feet took a few little jumps.

The wooden church where Kunin now arrived was old and gray; the columns of the porch had once been decorated with white paint, which had entirely peeled off, so they resembled two plain shafts. The picture over the door looked like one continuous black blot. This poverty-stricken appearance touched and moved Kunin; humbly lowering his eyes, he stepped into the church and stood by the door. The service had only just begun—the old Cantor, bent like a bow, was reading the "hours" in a dull monotonous tenor voice; Father Jacob, officiating without a deacon, was incensing the church. Had it not been humility which had induced Kunin to enter this poor little church, he must have smiled at the sight of Father Jacob. This under-sized priest wore a crumpled chasuble, of some frayed yellow material and it was so much too long for him that it trailed on the ground.

The church was not at all full, and in the first glance Kunin was struck by one extraordinary fact—he could only see old people and children. Where were the adult workers? Where were youth and manhood? But after a while he examined the old people's faces more carefully and discovered that he had mistaken the young for the old. However, he did not attach any particular importance to this little optical illusion. The interior of the church was as old and gray as the exterior. There was not one little space, on the ikonostase or the fawn-colored walls, which was not bespotted and scratched by time. There were plenty of windows, but, the predominating color being gray, the church looked gloomy.

"He who is pure of heart can pray here," thought Kunin. "Just as at St. Peter's in Rome, one is impressed by the grandeur, here one is touched by the modesty and simplicity."

But this prayerful disposition vanished like smoke when Father Jacob went to the altar and began the Mass. Although at a very early age ordained a priest, from the very benches of the seminary, Father Jacob had not yet adopted any regular way of conducting the service. When he read he seemed to be choosing which was the most suitable voice, a high tenor or mezzo-bass. He bowed awkwardly, walked rapidly, closed and opened the holy gates with violence. The old Cantor was evidently ailing and deaf, and frequently did not hear the terminations of prayers, which consequently led to a few little misunderstandings. Father Jacob would not have finished his part before the Cantor

would already be intoning his, or else Father Jacob had finished some time, and the old man was still straining his ear towards the altar, listening, and remaining silent till someone pulled at his vestment. The old Cantor had a monotonous asthmatic voice with a quaver in it, and he also lisped. To complete the list of misfortunes, he was accompanied by a very small boy, whose head hardly appeared above the railing of the choir. The boy sang in a shrill treble, and seemed to make every effort not to drop upon the right note. Kunin stopped a little to listen, then went out and smoked; he was completely disenchanted, and looked almost with hatred at the gray church.

"They complain of the loss of religious feeling among the people," he sighed. "I should think so; they had better fix us up with a few more of such popes!"

Kunin went back into the church three times, but each time he was forcibly compelled to return to the fresher air outside. He waited for the end of the Mass, then went over to Father Jacob's house. From its exterior the priest's house was in no way distinguishable from a peasant's cottage, although the straw on the roof lay a trifle more evenly, and there were some little white curtains in the windows. Father Jacob led Kunin into a small light room, the floor of which was of clay and the walls pasted over with cheap paper. Apart from some efforts towards luxuriousness in the shape of photographs in frames, and a clock, on the pendulum of which was hung a pair of scissors, the surroundings struck one as very beggarly. Looking at the furniture, one might think Father Jacob had collected them separately on his visits; in one place they had given him a round three-legged table, in another a stool, in the third a chair with its back curved very far backwards, in a fourth a chair with a very straight back but with a very low sunk seat, in the fifth they must have felt very liberal, and had given him something in the shape of a sofa, with a flat back and a cane seat. This similitude of a sofa was colored in dark red, and smelt strongly of paint. Kunin at first thought of sitting on one of the chairs, then he decided to sit on the stool.

"Is it the first time you have been to our church?" Father Jacob asked, hanging his hat on a large misshapen nail.

"Yes, it's the first time. I'll tell you what, batushka, before we get to business, let's have some tea. I am quite parched."

Father Jacob blinked, gave a croak, and went behind a partition. There was a sound of whispering.

"He must be talking to his wife," thought Kunin. "It will be interesting to see Carroty's popess."

A little while after, Father Jacob came from behind the partition, very red, perspiring, and with an attempt at a smile, sat opposite Kunin on the edge of the sofa.

"They'll prepare the samovar directly," he said, not looking at his guest.

"Good Lord, they have not got the samovar ready," Kunin thought with horror. "Well, we shall have to wait."

"I have brought the rough draft of a letter I have written to the Prelate," he said. "We will read it after our tea; perhaps you will find something to add."

"Very well."

There was silence. Father Jacob anced uneasily at the partition, noothed his hair, and blew his nose.

"It's wonderful weather," he said.

"Yes. By the way, I read a very in-resting thing last night: the Communal emstvo have decided to give back their hools to the clergy. It's very char-cteristic."

Kunin got up and began walking about e room, at the same time expressing s opinions.

"That is nothing," he said, "if only e clergy were on a level with their lling and clearly understood their task. o my misfortune, I know priests who intellectual developments, and by eir moral qualities, are not fit to be my scribes, much less priests. And u must allow that a bad teacher does ss harm to a school than a bad priest."

Kunin glanced at Father Jacob, who as sitting doubled up, thinking intently out something, and obviously not tening to his guest.

"Iasha, just come here a minute," woman's voice was heard to say be-nd the partition. Father Jacob gave start, and went behind the partition; ain there was a sound of whispering. Kunin felt oppressed with despair out the tea.

"No, I won't wait here for some tea," thought, looking at the clock. "I n't seem exactly a welcome guest. y host has hardly deigned to speak word; he just sits there blinking his es."

Kunin reached for his hat, waited for ther Jacob, then took his departure. "The morning has been wasted," he ught angrily, on his way back. olt, blockhead, he takes as much interest in the school as I do in last year's snow! No, I won't cook kasha with him! We shall do nothing with that fellow. If the Mareschal knew the kind of pope we had here, he would not be in such a hurry to chatter about a school. We must first look about for a good pope, and then think of the school."

Kunin almost hated Father Jacob now. That pitiable little caricature of a creature in the long crumpled chasuble, with his womanish face, his way of officiating, his manner of life, his servile and timid deference, snuffed out that small particle of religious feeling which had kept till then a place in Kunin's breast, gently simmering along with the other cradle-songs of his childhood. The coldness and inattention, which his sincere and fervid interests in the other one's affairs had encountered, were too much for Kunin's *amour-propre* to bear.

That same evening Kunin walked about his room for a long time, then sat down resolutely at the table, and began a letter to the Prelate. Having requested money and blessings for the school, he, among other things, humbly, and as a son to his father, expressed his opinion on the priest of Sinkino. "He is young, he wrote, "not sufficiently developed, seems somewhat intemperate, and altogether does not answer to those requirements which the centuries have laid upon the Russian people with regard to their pastors."

When he had finished the letter Kunin gave a little sigh of relief, and lay down to sleep with the consciousness of having done a good work.

On the Monday morning, while he was still in bed, they came to announce that Father Jacob wanted to see him. He did not feel inclined to get up, so

he told them to say he was not at home. He went away on the Tuesday to an assembly, and, returning on the Saturday, heard from the servants that Father Jacob had called every day during his absence.

"It looks as if he liked my cracknels!" thought Kunin.

On Sunday, towards evening, Father Jacob arrived. This time not only the folds of his cassock but also his hat was bespattered with mud. As on his first visit, he was red in the face and perspiring, and, as then, he sat on the arm of the chair.

Kunin decided not to start the conversation about the school, not to throw away pearls.

"I have brought you a list of the school-books, Paul Michaelitch," Father Jacob began.

"Thank you."

But it was too evident that Father Jacob had not come on account of the list. His whole manner expressed great uneasiness, at the same time decision was clearly written on his face, like someone suddenly illuminated by an idea. He had something important, or at the very least necessary to say, and was endeavoring to overcome his shyness.

"What is he silent for?" angrily thought Kunin. "He has sat himself here—shall I never get rid of him?"

So as somewhat to pass off the awkwardness of his silence, and to conceal the struggle going on within, the priest began to smile constrainedly. What with the perspiration, and the redness of his face, and the incompatibility of the fixed look of his gray-blue eyes with this lengthy tortured smile, Kunin turned away with loathing.

"Excuse me, batushka, I must leav you."

Father Jacob gave a start like some one who had been struck while asleep then, without ceasing to smile, began i some agitation to arrange the folds o his cassock. Notwithstanding his aver sion to this man, Kunin suddenly fel sorry for him, and wished to mak amends for his harshness.

"Till next time, batushka," he said "and before you leave I have a reques to make. I have just been inspired, an have written two sermons. I will giv them to you to look over. Read ther at your leisure."

"Very good," said Father Jacob, cov ering with his hand Kunin's sermons ly ing on the table. I'll take them. . . .

He stood for a moment, hesitated and, still arranging the folds of his ca sock, suddenly ceased to smile con strainedly, and resolutely raised h head.

"Paul Michaelitch," he said, appa ently with an attempt to speak loud and distinctly.

"What do you want?"

"I heard that you had . . . paid o your secretary, and . . . and . . . we now looking for another. . . ."

"Yes. Have you someone to recon mend?"

"I, do you see . . . I . . . Could n you give this place . . . to me?"

"But are you giving up the pries hood?" said Kunin in surprise.

"No, no," quickly answered Fath Jacob, turning pale and trembling in his limbs. "The Lord preserve me! is not at all necessary—don't fear could do it between whiles . . . to i crease my income. . . . It would n be necessary—don't worry."

Him . . . income. But I only give y secretary twenty roubles a month."

"Ghospodi! but I would take ten," hispered Father Jacob looking round. I would be content with ten! You . . . you are astonished, and everyone astonished. The greedy covetous ope, what does he do with his money? myself feel that it is greedy . . . and ndemn, blame myself, and look at peo- e in the face with shame. To you, aul Michaelitch, I confess, I call the ruth of God to witness. . . ."

Father Jacob took breath, and con- nued:

"I prepared the whole confession on e way here; but I have forgotten it, d now I can't find the words. I get yearly income of one hundred and ty roubles, and everyone wonders nat I do with this money. I will clear y conscience: I send forty roubles a ar to my brother Peter at the clerical hool. I can write it all down, only my per and pen. . . ."

"Ah, I believe you, I believe you. ut what about it?" said Kunin, wav- g a hand, and feeling a fearful burden posed on him in this great confidence his guest, and not knowing how to out of the way of the fearful glint his eyes.

"Then, I have not entirely paid off account at the Consistory; they ckoned two hundred roubles for my ne there, to be paid in monthly in- llments of ten roubles. Consider how ch remains to me! And then, be- es that, I have to give Father Abra- m at least three roubles a month."

"Who is Father Abraham?"

"Father Abraham was priest before at Sinkino. They dismissed him be- se . . . of a failing, and he now is living in Sinkino. Where could he go? How was he to get food? He may be old, but he wants a fire, and bread, and clothing. I cannot admit that he in his position should have to beg. If it were so, I should be sinning. It would be to my shame. He owes everyone money, and it would be my sin if I did not pay for him."

Father Jacob jumped up, and, fixing the door with a senseless stare, began to walk from end to end of the room.

"My God! My God!" he muttered, raising and lowering his hands. "Save us Lord, and have mercy! Wherefore take upon oneself such a position if one had so little faith and no strength? There is no end to my despair! Save us, Mother of God!"

"Calm yourself, batushka!" said Kunin.

"I am famished, Paul Michaelitch," continued Father Jacob; "graciously forgive me, for I have not strength left. I know I have only to humble myself to ask, and everyone would help me, but . . . I cannot. It is against my conscience; how can I beg of moujiks? You work here and see for yourself. Who would dare raise a hand to ask the poor? And to beg of the rich, the local landowners, I cannot! It's pride—shame." Father Jacob gesticulated, and nervously combed back his hair with his hands. "It's a disgrace. God! how ashamed I am; I am too proud to let people see my poverty. When you came to see me there was no tea in the house, Paul Michaelitch, not a scrap, and you see, pride prevented my telling you so. I am ashamed of my clothes—just look at these patches; I am ashamed of my chasuble, my hunger. Is it right for a priest to have pride?"

Father Jacob stood still in the middle of the room, as if he did not notice the presence of Kunin, and began to reason with himself.

"Now, suppose I bear hunger and shame? But then, good Lord, I have my wife, and I have taken her from comfortable surroundings; her hands are white and soft, she is accustomed to tea, and white bread, and sheets. When she was with her parents she played the piano; she is still young, not twenty—she would no doubt like to dress up, amuse herself, go and pay visits. But she lives with me less well than any cook, and does not like to show herself in the street. My God! My God! Her only treat is when I bring her an apple, or a cracknel, from one of my visits."

Father Jacob again combed his hair back with his fingers.

"And the result is, not love, but pity. I can't see her without a feeling of pain. And these are the things which happen on earth, ghospodi! Things happen which, if they were in the newspapers, people wouldn't believe them. And when will all this end?"

"That'll do, batushka!" Kunin cried, frightened by his tone. "Why look so gloomily on life?"

"Graciously forgive me, Paul Michaelitch," Father Jacob mumbled as if he were drunk. "Forgive all this—it's nothing, don't notice it. . . . I only blame myself, and will always do so . . . always."

Father Jacob looked around, then whispered:

"One morning, early, I was going from Sinkino to Lutchkova, when I noticed a woman standing by the river. I went nearer, and couldn't believe my eyes. Mercy! it was the doctor's wife rinsing her linen. . . . The doctor's wife had done her course at the Institute, therefore . . . in order not to be discovered washing, waited her opoprtunity, got up before anyone else, and went a verst away from the village. There's pride! When she saw that I was quite close to her and had discovered her poverty, she grew quite red. I lost my wits, I was scared, I rushed up to her, I wanted to help her, but she hid her linen from me afraid lest I should see her torn chemises."

"It all seems incredible," said Kunin sitting down, and looking almost with horror at Father Jacob's white face.

"That's just it—incredible. It has never before happened, Paul Michaelitch, never, that the doctor's wife has to go to the river to rinse her linen. Never in any country has it happened. I, as pastor and spiritual father, should not allow this, but what am I to do? What? I myself am just waiting to be attended to for nothing by her husband. You remarked just now: 'It all seemed incredible.' One can't believe one's eyes. During Mass, for instance, I look from the altar, I see my congregation, the hungry Abraham, his wife, and I think of the doctor's wife, with her hands blue from the ice-cold water; believe me, one's senses leave one, and one stands there like a fool, insensible, till the sacristan calls. It's awful!"

Father Jacob again began to walk about.

"Oh, Jesus!" he said, with a gesture of his hands. "Holy Saints! I can even officiate; you talk to me of school, while I stand like a wooden figure, understanding nothing, and thinking only of food, even at the altar. But what am I doing?" he suddenly recol

ted. "You want to go—excuse me, s just me! . . . forgive me. . . ."
Kunin silently gave his hand to Father cob, and accompanied him to the stibule; then, returning to his room, od at the window. He saw Father cob leave the house, pull his wide-mmed rusty-colored hat over his eyes, d, hanging his head as if ashamed of disclosures, slowly walk away.
'I don't see his horse," thought nin
Kunin dared not think that the priest d come to see him day after day on t: it was seven or eight versts to kino, and mud up to one's neck. A ment after, Kunin saw Andrew, the chman, and the boy, Paramon, run-g towards Father Jacob for his bless-, and splashing him with mud as they nped over the puddles.
Father Jacob slowly took off his hat, ssed Andrew, then blessed the boy d stroked his head.
Kunin passed his hand over his eyes, d it seemed to him there was mois-e on it. He left the window, and with chagrined expression surveyed the m, in which he still seemed to hear timid choking voice of the priest. glanced at the table—fortunately, her Jacob, in his hurry, had forgot-to take the sermons with him; Kunin ed them, tore them into little bits, flung them with loathing under the le.
And I did not know!" he moaned, king into the sofa. "I, who have been king here for over a year as life-mber of the Council, Honorary Jus-of the Peace, Member of the School mmittee! Blind puppet! Popinjay! must help him quickly. We must, eed!"

He tossed uneasily, applied his hand to his forehead, and exerted his brain.
"On the 20th day of this month I shall get my pay of 200 roubles. With some plausible excuse I will slip some into his hand, and some to the doctor's wife. I'll order a thanksgiving service from the one, and I'll feign illness for the doctor, in that way I shall not offend their pride. And I'll help Abraham. . . ." He counted his money on his fingers, and did not like to allow to himself that these 200 roubles were scarcely sufficient to pay the steward, the servants, and the moujik who brought the meat. Involuntarily, he remembered the recent past, in which he had senselessly run through his father's patrimony; when as a twenty-year-old novice he had made presents of expensive fans to courtesans, had paid the cab-driver Kuzma ten roubles a day, and out of vanity had offered presents to actresses. Ah, how useful all those squandered three-rouble, ten-rouble notes would be now!
"Father Abraham lives on three roubles a month," thought Kunin. "For a rouble, the popess could make herself a skirt, and the doctor's wife could have a washer-woman. I will help them all the same. It's a duty!"
And here . . . suddenly . . . Kunin remembered the information he had written to the Prelate, and he shriveled up as if seized by a sudden attack of cold. The recollection of this overwhelmed him with a feeling of crushing shame towards himself and the Invisible Truth. . . .
And so began and ended the sincere efforts towards useful activity of a well-intentioned but thoroughly overfed and inconsiderate being.

Miss N. N.'s Story

About nine years go, during hay-making time, I and Peter Sergéich, assistant magistrate, rode over to the station to fetch the letters, one summer night.

The weather was clear, but when returning we heard thunder and saw an angry black cloud speeding towards us.

On its dark background our house and the church looked white and the tall poplars seemed turned to silver. There was a scent of rain and new-mown hay in the air. My companion was gay, laughed and talked all sorts of nonsense. He said if on our way we could come across some mediæval castle, a shelter from the storm, and where in the end we would be killed by the lightning, he would rejoice.

Suddenly the first wave passed over the rye and oat fields, and a violent gust of wind raised a cloud of dust on the road. Peter Sergéich laughed and spurred his horse on.

"Great!" he shouted. "This is ideal!"

Infected by his gaiety and by the thought that I would soon be wet to the skin, and might be killed by the lightning, I also began to laugh.

This whirlwind and the rapid riding against the storm took the breath away, making one feel like a bird; it agitated and tickled the breast. When we rode into our yard the wind had subsided, but large drops of rain rattled on the grass and on the roofs. There was not a soul near the stables.

Peter Sergéich unbridled the horses and led them to the stalls. While waiting for him to finish, I stood at the door and looked at the slanting rain. The luscious and exciting odour of th hay was more perceptible here than the fields; the clouds and rain made dusk.

"What a peal!" Peter Sergéich sai coming up to me after a terribly pr longed peal of thunder, when it a peared as if the sky had been rent asu der. "Wasn't that a peal?"

He stood beside me in the doorwa still breathing heavily from the rap riding, and he looked at me. I notic that he was admiring me.

"Natalia Vladimirovna," he said, would give everything I possess if could only remain thus and look at y for ever. You are beautiful to-day."

He gazed at me enraptured, and w entreaty in his eyes; his face was pa and on his beard and moustache ra drops glistened, and they, too, seem to look at me with love.

"I love you!" he said. "I love y and am happy when I see you. I kn you cannot be my wife; I want nothi I require nothing, but that you sho know I love you. Be silent, do n answer me, do not pay any attention me, only know that you are dear to m and permit me to look at you."

His enthusiasm was communicated me. I looked at his inspired face; heard his voice which was blended w the noise of the rain, and as if enchant I was unable to move.

I wished to look at his brilliant e and listen to him without end.

"You are silent—excellent!" Pe Sergéich said. "Continue to be silen

I was happy. I laughed with pleas and ran under the pelting rain into t

ouse; he also laughed, and with a skip
ıd a jump he ran after me.

Making a noise like two children we
oth rushed, wet and breathless, up the
airs and bounced into the room. My
ther and brother, who were unaccus-
med to see me laughing and gay,
ooked at me with surprise, and they also
egan to laugh.

The storm clouds passed away, the
under became silent, but still the rain-
ops glistened in Peter Sergéich's
ard. The whole of that evening until
pper he sang, whistled, played noisily
th the dog, chased it round the rooms
d just missed knocking the man-
rvant, who was bringing in the samo-
r, off his legs. At supper he ate very
ich, talked very loud, and asserted
at when you ate fresh cucumbers in
e winter you had a taste of spring in
e mouth.

When I went to bed I lit my candle,
ened the window wide and gave my-
f up to the undefined feelings that
ssessed my breast. I remembered
at I was free, healthy, distinguished,
h, that I was loved, but chiefly that
was distinguished and rich—distin-
ished and rich—how nice that was,
God! . . . Then feeling the cold
at was borne to me together with the
w from the garden, I cuddled up in
d and tried to understand if I loved
did not love Peter Sergéich . . .
d not being able to understand any-
ng I fell asleep.

In the morning when I saw a
mbling spot of sunshine and the
dow of lime branches on my bed, all
t had happened the day before arose
idly in my mind. Life appeared to
rich, varied, full of attractions. I
dressed quickly, singing, and ran into
the garden. . . .

And what was afterwards? Afterwards—was nothing. In the winter, when we were living in town, Peter Sergéich came to us but seldom. The acquaintances of the country are only charming in the country and in summer—in town, and in winter they lose half their attraction. When in town you offer them tea, they seem to be in other people's coats, and stir their tea too long with the spoons. Sometimes in town Peter Sergéich also spoke of love, but how different it sounded when spoken in the village. In town we felt more strongly the wall that separated us! I was distinguished and rich; and he was poor, he was not even noble, only the son of a deacon, he was only an assistant magistrate; we both—I from youth, and he, God knows why—considered this wall very high and thick, and he, when he came to us in town, smiled affectedly and criticized the higher society, or remained gloomily silent when anybody else was in the drawing-room. There is never a wall that cannot be broken through; but the heroes of present-day fiction, as far as I know them, are too timid, too slow, too lazy and fearsome and they are too apt to be satisfied with the thought that they are failures and that their own life has duped them; instead of struggling, they only criticize and call the world mean, and they forget that their own criticism gradually degenerates into meanness.

I was loved; happiness was near, and it appeared to be living shoulder to shoulder with me. I sang as I lived, not trying to understand myself, not knowing for what I waited, or what I wanted from life—and time sped on and

on. People passed me with their love, bright days and warm nights flitted by; nightingales sang—there was the scent of hay—and all this so charming and wonderful in recollection passed quickly by me unvalued, as with everybody, leaving no trace and vanished like a mist. . . . Where is it all?

My father died. I have grown old. All that pleased me, that caressed me, that gave me hope—the noise of rain, the rolling of thunder, the thoughts of happiness, the words of love—all this has become a mere recollection, and I see before me a flat, empty plain; there is not a single living soul on the plain, and there on the distant horizon it is dark and terrible . . .

There was a bell. Peter Sergéich had come to see me. When I see the country in winter and remember how green it became for me in summer, I whisper:

"Oh, my darlings!"

And when I see the people with whom I passed my spring, I grow sad and warm, and I whisper the same words.

Long since, by my father's influence, he had been transferred to town. He has grown somewhat older, somewhat thinner. Long ago he ceased to talk to me of love, he no longer talked nonsense, he did not like his work; he had some sort of ailment, he was disappointed with something; he had given up expecting anything from life and he had no zest in existence. He sat down near the fire and looked silently into the flames. And I, not knowing what to say, asked:

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing," he replied.

Then there was silence again. The red glow of the fire skipped about his sad face.

I remembered the past, and suddenly my shoulders began shaking, and I burst into bitter tears. I became unbearably sorry for myself, and for this man, and I passionately longed for that which was passed, and for that which life now refused us. And now I no longer thought that I was distinguished and rich.

I sobbed aloud, pressing my temples and murmured:

"My God, my God, life is ruined . . ."

And he sat there in silence and did not say: "Do not cry." He understood that it was necessary to cry, and that the time had come for that. I saw in his eyes that he was sorry for me, and I, too, was sorry for him, and I was vexed for that poor timid wretch who had not been able to arrange either my life or his own.

When I conducted him to the door it appeared to me that he was purposely very long in the ante-room in putting on his fur coat. He kissed my hand a couple of times, and he looked long into my tear-stained eyes. I think at that moment he remembered the thunder-storm, the streams of rain, our laughter, and my face as it was then. He wanted to say something to me, and he would have been glad to have said it; but he said nothing, he only shook his head and pressed my hand hard. God bless him!

When he had gone I returned into my boudoir and sat down again on the carpet in front of the fire. The red coals had changed into ashes and were going out. The frost knocked more fiercely at the windows, and the wind began singing a song about something in the chimney.

My maid came into the room, and thinking I had fallen asleep, called to me. . . .

The Young Wife

The little town of B——, consisting two or three crooked streets, was und asleep. There was a complete illness in the motionless air. Nothing ould be heard but far away, outside e town no doubt, the barking of a dog a thin, hoarse tenor. It was close on daybreak.

Everything had long been asleep. The ly person not asleep was the young fe of Tchernomordik, a qualified dis-nser who kept a chemist's shop at ——. She had gone to bed and got up ain three times, but could not sleep, e did not know why. She sat at the en window in her nightdress and oked into the street. She felt bored, pressed, vexed . . . so vexed that e felt quite inclined to cry—again she d not know why. There seemed to a lump in her chest that kept rising o her throat. . . . A few paces hind her Tchernomordik lay curled close to the wall, snoring sweetly. A eedy flea was stabbing the bridge of nose, but he did not feel it, and was sitively smiling, for he was dreaming t everyone in the town had a cough, d was buying from him the King of nmark's cough-drops. He could not ve been wakened now by pinpricks by cannon or by caresses.

The chemist's shop was almost at the reme end of the town, so that the emist's wife could see far into the ds. She could see the eastern horizon wing pale by degrees, then turning nson as though from a great fire. A broad-faced moon peeped out un-ectedly from behind bushes in the tance. It was red (as a rule when the moon emerges from behind bushes it appears to be blushing).

Suddenly in the stillness of the night there came the sound of footsteps and a jingle of spurs. She could hear voices.

"That must be the officers going home to the camp from the Police Captain's," thought the chemist's wife.

Soon afterwards two figures wearing officers' white tunics came into sight: one big and tall, the other thinner and shorter. . . . They slouched along by the fence, dragging one leg after the other and talking loudly together. As they passed the chemist's shop, they walked more slowly than ever, and glanced up at the windows.

"It smells like a chemist's," said the thin one. "And so it is! Ah, I remember. . . . I came here last week to buy some castor-oil. There's a chemist here with a sour face and the jawbone of an ass! Such a jawbone, my dear fellow! It must have been a jawbone like that Samson killed the Philistines with."

"M'yes," said the big one in a bass voice. "The pharmacist is asleep. And his wife is asleep too. She is a pretty woman, Obtyosov."

"I saw her. I liked her very much. . . . Tell me, doctor, can she possibly love that jawbone of an ass? Can she?"

"No, most likely she does not love him," sighed the doctor, speaking as though he were sorry for the chemist. "The little woman is asleep behind the window, Obtyosov, what? Tossing with the heat, her little mouth half open . . . and one little foot hanging out of bed. I bet that fool the chemist

doesn't realize what a lucky fellow he is. . . . No doubt he sees no difference between a woman and a bottle of carbolic!"

"I say, doctor," said the officer, stopping. "Let us go into the shop and buy something. Perhaps we shall see her."

"What an idea—in the night!"

"What of it! They are obliged to serve one even at night. My dear fellow, let us go in!"

"If you like. . . ."

The chemist's wife, hiding behind the curtain, heard a muffled ring. Looking round at her husband, who was smiling and snoring sweetly as before, she threw on her dress, slid her bare feet into her slippers, and ran to the shop.

On the other side of the glass door she could see two shadows. The chemist's wife turned up the lamp and hurried to the door to open it, and now she felt neither vexed nor bored nor inclined to cry, though her heart was thumping. The big doctor and the slender Obtyosov walked in. Now she could get a view of them. The doctor was corpulent and swarthy; he wore a beard and was slow in his movements. At the slightest motion his tunic seemed as though it would crack, and perspiration came on to his face. The officer was rosy, clean-shaven, feminine-looking, and as supple as an English whip.

"What may I give you?" asked the chemist's wife, holding her dress across her bosom.

"Give us . . . er-er . . . four pennyworth of peppermint lozenges!"

Without haste the chemist's wife took down a jar from a shelf and began weighing out lozenges. The customers stared fixedly at her back; the doctor screwed up his eyes like a well-fed ca while the lieutenant was very grave.

"It's the first time I've seen a lad serving in a chemist's shop," observe the doctor.

"There's nothing out of the way i it," replied the chemist's wife, lookin out of the corner of her eye at th rosy-cheeked officer. "My husband ha no assistant, and I always help him

"To be sure. . . . You have charming little shop! What a number different . . . jars! And you a not afraid of moving about among th poisons? Brrr!"

The chemist's wife sealed up th parcel and handed it to the docto Obtyosov gave her the money. Half minute of silence followed. . . . Th men exchanged glances, took a ste towards the door, then looked at on another again.

"Will you give me two pennywort of soda?" said the doctor.

Again the chemist's wife slowly an languidly raised her hand to the she

"Haven't you in the shop anythi . . . such as . . ." mutter Obtyosov, moving his fingers, "som thing, so to say, allegorical . . revivifying . . . seltzer-water, f instance. Have you any seltzer-water

"Yes," answered the chemist's wi

"Bravo! You're a fairy, not woman! Give us three bottles!"

The chemist's wife hurriedly sealed the soda and vanished through the do into the darkness.

"A peach!" said the doctor, with wink. "You wouldn't find a pineapp like that in the island of Madeira! E What do you say? Do you hear t snoring, though? That's his worship t chemist enjoying sweet repose."

A minute later the chemist's wife me back and set five bottles on the unter. She had just been in the cel-, and so was flushed and rather ex-ed.

"Sh-sh! . . . quietly!" said btyosov when, after uncorking the ttles, she dropped the corkscrew. Don't make such a noise; you'll wake ur husband."

"Well, what if I do wake him?"

"He is sleeping so sweetly . . . he ust be dreaming of you. . . . To ur health!"

"Besides," boomed the doctor, hiccup-ng after the seltzer-water, "husbands e such a dull business that it would be y nice of them to be always asleep. w good a drop of red wine would be this water!"

"What an idea!" laughed the chemist's fe.

"That would be splendid. What a y they don't sell spirits in chemist's ops. Though you ought to sell wine a medicine. Have you any *vinum licum rubrum?*"

"Yes."

"Well, then, give us some! Bring it e, damn it!"

"How much do you want?"

"*Quantum satis.* . . . Give us an nce each in the water, and afterwards 'll see. . . . Obtyosov, what do u say? First with water and after-rds *per se.* . . ."

The doctor and Obtyosov sat down to counter, took off their caps, and an drinking the wine.

The wine, one must admit, is tched stuff! *Vinum nastissimum!* ough in the presence of . . . er . . . it tastes like nectar. You are enchanting, madam! In imagination I kiss your hand."

"I would give a great deal to do so not in imagination," said Obtyosov. "On my honor, I'd give my life."

"That's enough," said Madame Tchernomordik, flushing and assuming a serious expression.

"What a flirt you are, though!" the doctor laughed softly, looking slyly at her from under his brows. "Your eyes seem to be firing shot: piff-paff! I congratulate you: you've conquered! We are vanquished!"

The chemist's wife looked at their ruddy faces, listened to their chatter, and soon she, too, grew quite lively. Oh, she felt so gay! She entered into the conversation, she laughed, flirted, and even, after repeated requests from the customers, drank two ounces of wine.

"You officers ought to come in oftener from the camp," she said; "it's awful how dreary it is here. I'm simply dying of it."

"I should think so!" said the doctor indignantly. "Such a peach, a miracle of nature, thrown away in the wilds! How well Griboyedov said, 'Into the wilds, to Saratov!' It's time for us to be off, though. Delighted to have made your acquaintance . . . very. How much do we owe you?"

The chemist's wife raised her eyes to the ceiling and her lips moved for some time.

"Twelve roubles forty-eight kopecks," she said.

Obtyosov took out of his pocket a fat pocketbook, and after fumbling for some time among the notes, paid.

"Your husband's sleeping sweetly . . . he must be dreaming," he

muttered, pressing her hand at parting.

"I don't like to hear silly remarks. . . ."

"What silly remarks? On the contrary, it's not silly at all . . . even Shakespeare said: 'Happy is he who in his youth is young.'"

"Let go my hand."

At last after much talk and after kissing the lady's hand at parting, the customers went out of the shop irresolutely, as though they were wondering whether they had not forgotten something.

She ran quickly into the bedroom and sat down in the same place. She saw the doctor and the officer, on coming out of the shop, walk lazily away a distance of twenty paces; then they stopped and began whispering together. What about? Her heart throbbed, there was a pulsing in her temples, and why she did not know. . . . Her hear beat violently as though those two whispering outside were deciding her fate.

Five minutes later the doctor parted from Obtyosov and walked on, while Obtyosov came back. He walked past the shop once and a second time. . . . He would stop near the door and then take a few steps again. At last the bell tinkled discreetly.

"What? Who is there?" the chemist's wife heard her husband's voice suddenly. "There's a ring at the bell, and you don't hear it," he said, severely. "Is that the way to do things?"

He got up, put on his dressing-gown and staggering, half asleep, flopped his slippers to the shop.

"What . . . is it?" he asked Obtyosov.

"Give me . . . give me four pennyworth of peppermint lozenges."

Sniffing continually, yawning, dropping asleep as he moved, and knocking his knees against the counter, the chemist went to the shelf and reached down the jar.

Two minutes later the chemist's wife saw Obtyosov go out of the shop, and after he had gone some steps, she saw him throw the packet of peppermints on the dusty road. The doctor came from behind a corner to meet him. . . . They met and, gesticulating, vanished in the morning mist.

"How unhappy I am!" said the chemist's wife, looking angrily at her husband, who was undressing quickly to get into bed again. "Oh, how unhappy I am!" she repeated, suddenly melting into bitter tears. "And nobody knows, nobody knows. . . ."

"I forgot fourpence on the counter," muttered the chemist, pulling the quilt over him. "Put it away in the till please. . . ."

And at once he fell asleep again.

The Peasants

CHAPTER I

BLOWS

Nikolai Tchikildeveff, waiter, of e Slaviansky Bazaar Hotel at Moscow, ame ill. Once in a corridor he mbled and fell with a tray of ham d peas and had to resign. What money had, his own and his wife's, soon nt on treatment. He was tired of eness and had to return to his native age. It was cheaper to live at home, er all, and the best place for in- ids; and there is some truth in the verb, "At home the walls feel good." He arrived at Zhukovo towards even- . He pictured his birthplace as cosy, l comfortable as a child, but now en he entered the hut he knew it was se, and dirty inside. And his wife a and little daughter Sasha looked stioningly at the big, sooty stove, ck from smoke, which took up half hut and was covered with flies. The ve was crooked, the logs in the walls ed, and it seemed that every minute hut would tumble to pieces. The n-corner, instead of pictures, was g with bottle-labels and newspaper- ings. Poverty, poverty! Of the wn-ups no one was at home—they ed in the fields; and alone on the e sat an eight-year-old girl, fair- ed, unwashed, and so indifferent that did not even look at the strangers. eath, a white cat rubbed herself nst the pot-hanger.

Puss, puss!" cried Sasha. "Pussy!"

She can't hear," said the girl on the e. "She's deaf!"

How deaf?"

"Deaf. . . . From beating."

The first glance told Nikolai and Olga the life awaiting them; but they said nothing, silently laid down their bundles, and went into the street. The hut was the third from the corner, and the oldest and poorest in sight; its next-door neighbour, indeed, was little better; but the corner cabin boasted an iron roof and curtains in the windows. This cabin had no fence, and stood alone; it was the village inn. In one continuous row stretched other huts; and, as a whole, the village, peaceful and meditative, with the willows, elders, and mountain-ash peeping out of the gardens, was pleasing to see.

Behind the cabins the ground sloped steeply towards the river; and here and there in the clay stuck denuded stones. On the slope, around these stones and the potters' pits, lay heaps of potsherds, some brown, some red; and below stretched a broad, flat, and bright green meadow, already mown, and now given over to the peasants' herds. A verst from the village ran the winding river with its pretty tufted banks; and beyond the river another field, a herd, long strings of white geese; then, as on the village side, a steep ascent. On the crest of the hill rose another village with a five-cupolaed church, and a little beyond it the local noble's house.

"It's a fine place, your village," said Olga, crossing herself towards the church. "What freedom, Lord!"

At that moment (it was Saturday

night) the church bells rang for vesper service. In the valley beneath, two little girls with a water-pail turned their heads towards the church and listened to the bells.

"At the Slaviansky Bazaar they're sitting down to dinner," said Nikolai thoughtfully.

Seated on the brink of the ravine, Nikolai and Olga watched the setting sun and the image of the gold and purple sky in the river and in the church windows, and inhaled the soft, restful, inexpressibly pure air, unknown to them in Moscow. When the sun had set came lowing cattle and bleating sheep; geese flew towards them; and all was silent. The soft light faded from the air and evening shadows swept across the land.

Meantime the absent family returned to the hut. First came Nikolai's father and mother, dry, bent, and toothless, and of equal height. Later, their sons' wives, Marya and Fekla, employed on the noble's farm across the river. Marya, wife of Nikolai's brother Kiriak, had six children; Fekla, wife of Denis, then a soldier, two; and when Nikolai, entering the hut, saw the whole family, all these big and little bodies, which moved in the loft, in cradles, in corners; when he saw the greed with which the old man and women ate black bread soaked in water, he felt that he had made a mistake in coming home, sick, penniless, and—what was worse—with his family.

"And where is brother Kiriak?" he asked, greeting his parents.

"He's watchman at the trader's," answered the old man. "In the wood. He's a good lad, but drinks heavily."

"He's no profit," said the old woman in a lachrymose voice. "Our men are not much use, they bring nothing home with them, and only take things. O Kiriak drinks; and the old man, there no use hiding it, himself knows the wa to the drink-shop. They've angere our Mother in Heaven!"

In honor of the guests the samov was brought out. The tea smelt of fis the sugar was damp and looked as if had been gnawed, the bread and vess were covered with cockroaches; it w painful to drink, and painful to hear t talk—of nothing but poverty and sic ness. Before they had emptied th first glasses, from the yard came a lo drawling, drunken cry—

"Ma-arya!"

"That sounds like Kiriak," said t old man. "Talk of the devil and appears!"

The peasants were silent. A mom later came the same cry, rough a drawling, and this time it seemed to co from underground.

"Ma-arya!"

The elder daughter-in-law, Mar turned deadly pale and pressed her bc to the stove; and it was strange to the expression of terror on the face this strong, broad-shouldered, ugly man. Her daughter, the little, in ferent girl who had sat on the stove, s denly began to cry loudly.

"Stop howling, cholera!" cried ang Fekla, a good-looking woman, also str and broad-shouldered. "He won't you!"

From the old man Nikolai soon learn that Marya was afraid to live with husband in the forest; and that w he had drunk too much Kiriak came her, and made scenes and beat mercilessly.

"Ma-arya!" came the cry, this t from outside the door.

'Help me, for the love of heaven, p me!" chattered Marya, breathing if she had been thrown into icy water. elp me, kinsmen——"

The houseful of children suddenly be- to cry, and, seeing them, Sasha did same. A drunken cough echoed hout, and into the hut came a tall, ck-bearded muzhik wearing a winter . In the dim lamp-light his face was ely visible, and all the more terrible. was Kiriak. He went straight to his e, flourished his arm, and struck her h his clenched fist in the face. Marya not utter a sound, the blow seemed have stunned her, but she seemed to ndle; a stream of blood flowed out of nose.

'It's a shame, a shame," muttered the man, climbing on the stove. "And ore our visitors! It's a sin!"

The old woman kept silence, and, bent two, seemed lost in thought. Fekla ked the cradle. Kiriak seized Marya's d, dragged her to the door, and, increase her terror, roared like a st. But at that moment he saw visitors, and stopped.

So you've come!" he began, releas- his wife. "My own brother and family. . . ."

He prayed a moment before the im- , staggered, opened his red, drunken s, and continued—

My brother and family have come heir parents' house . . . from Mos- , that means . . . The old capital, means, the city of Moscow, mother cities. . . . Excuse . . ."

Amid the silence of all, he dropped the bench near the samovar, and an to drink loudly from a saucer. en he had drunk ten cupfuls he leaned back on the bench and began to snore.

Bed-time came. Nikolai, as an invalid, was given a place on the stove beside the old man; Sasha slept on the floor; and Olga went with the young women to the shed.

"Never mind, my heart!" she said, lying on the hay beside Marya. "Crying is no help. You must bear it. In the Bible it is written, 'Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' Don't cry, my heart!"

And then, in a whisper, she began to tell of Moscow, of her life there, how she had served as housemaid in furnished lodgings.

"In Moscow the houses are big and built of brick," said Olga. "There is no end of churches—forty forties of them—my heart; and the houses are all full of gentlemen, so good-looking, so smart!"

And Marya answered that she had never been in the district town, much less in Moscow; she was illiterate, and knew no prayers, not even "Our Father." Both she and her sister-in-law Fekla, who sat some way off and listened, were ignorant in the extreme, and understood nothing. Both disliked their husbands; Marya dreaded Kiriak, shook with terror when he stayed with her, and after his departure her head ached from the smell of vodka and tobacco. And Fekla, in answer to the question did she want her husband, answered angrily—

"What? . . . Him?"

For a time the women spoke, and then lay down.

It was cold, and a cock crew loudly, hindering sleep. When the blue morn-

ing light began to break through the chinks, Fekla rose stealthily and went out, and her movements could be heard, as she ran down the street in her bare feet.

CHAPTER II

MARYA

When Olga went to church she took with her Marya. As they descended the path to the meadow, both were in good humour. Olga liked the freedom of the country; and Marya found in her sister-in-law a kindred spirit. The sun was rising. Close to the meadow flew a sleepy hawk; the river was dull, for there was a slight mist, but the hill beyond it was bathed in light; the church glittered, and rooks cawed in the garden of the big house beyond.

"The old man is not bad," said Marya. "But my mother-in-law is cross and quarrelsome. Our own corn lasted till Shrovetide; now we have to buy at the inn; and the old woman is angry, and says, 'You eat too much.'"

"Never mind, my heart! You must bear that too. It is written in the Bible, 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden.'"

Olga spoke gravely and slowly; and walked, like a pilgrim, quickly and briskly. Every day she read the Gospel, aloud, like a clerk; and though there was much that she did not understand, the sacred words touched her to tears, and words like *astche, dondezhe* she pronounced with beating heart. She believed in God, in the Virgin, in the saints; and her faith was that it was wrong to do evil to any man, even to Germans, gipsies, and Jews. When she read aloud the Gospel, even when she stopped at words she did not understand, her face grew compassionate, kindly, and bright.

"What part are you from?" asked Marya

"Vladimir. I have been long in Moscow, since I was eight years old."

They approached the river. On the other bank stood a woman, undressing herself.

"That is our Fekla!" said Marya "She's been across the river at the squire's house. With the stewards. She's impudent and ill-spoken—awful!"

Black-browed Fekla, with loosened hair, jumped into the river, and, young and firm as a girl, splashed in the water, making big waves.

"She's impudent—awful!" repeated Marya.

Across the river was a shaky bridge of beams, and at that moment beneath it in the clear, transparent water swam carp. On the green bushes, imaged in the water, glistened dew. It was warm and pleasant. What a wonderful morning! And indeed, how splendid would be life in this world were it not for poverty, hideous, hopeless poverty, from which there is no escape! But look back to the village, and memory awakens all the events of yesterday; and the intoxication of joy vanishes in a wink.

The women reached the church. Marya stopped near the door, afraid to go inside. She feared, too, to sit down, though the service would not begin till nine o'clock, and stood all the time.

As the Gospel was being read the worshippers suddenly moved, and made way for the squire's family. In came two girls in white dresses with wide

brimmed hats, and behind them a stout, rosy boy dressed as a sailor. Their coming pleased Olga; she felt that here at last were well-taught, orderly, good-looking people. But Marya looked at them furtively and gloomily, as if they were not human beings but monsters who would crush her if she failed to make way.

And when the deacon sang out in a bass voice, she fancied she heard the cry "Ma-arya!" and shuddered.

CHAPTER III

SONGS

The village quickly heard of the visitors' arrival, and when church was over the hut was crowded. The Leonuitcheffs, Matveitcheffs, and Ilitchoffs came for news of their kinsmen in Moscow. Every man in Zhukovo who could read and write was taken to Moscow as waiter or boots; and, similarly, the village across the river supplied only bakers; and this custom obtained since before the Emancipation, when a certain legendary Luka Ivanuitch, of Zhukovo, was lord of the buffet in a Moscow club, and hired none but fellow-villagers. These, in turn attaining power, sent for their kinsmen and found them posts in inns and restaurants; so that from that time Zhukovo was called by the local population Khamskaya or Kholuefka. Nikolai was taken to Moscow at the age of eleven, and given a post by Ivan Makaruitch, one of the Matveitcheffs, then porter at the Hermitage Gardens. And, now, turning to the Matveitcheffs, Nikolai said gravely—

"Ivan Makaruitch was my benefactor; it is my duty to pray God for him day and night, for it was through him I became a good man."

"*Batiushka* mine!" said tearfully a tall, old woman, Ivan Makaruitch's sister. "And have you no news of him?"

"He was at Omon's last winter; and this season, I heard, he's in some gardens outside town. . . . He's grown old. Once in the summer he'd bring home ten roubles a day, but now everywhere business is dull—the old man's in a bad way."

The women, old and young, looked at the high felt boots on Nikolai's legs, and at his pale face, and said sadly—

"You're no money-maker, Nikolai Osipuitch, no money-bringer!"

And all caressed Sasha. Sasha was past her tenth birthday, but, small and very thin, she looked not more than seven. Among the sunburnt, untidy village girls, in their long cotton shirts, pale-faced, big-eyed Sasha, with the red ribbon in her hair, seemed a toy, a little strange animal caught in the fields, and brought back to the hut.

"And she knows how to read!" boasted Olga, looking tenderly at her daughter. "Read something, child!" she said, taking a New Testament from the corner. "Read something aloud and let the orthodox listen!"

The old, heavy, leather-bound, bent-edged Bible smelt like a monk. Sasha raised her eyebrows, and began in a loud drawl—

". . . And when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother . . ."

" 'The young child and his mother,' " repeated Olga. She reddened with joy.

". . . and flee into Egypt . . . and

be thou there until I bring thee word. . . ."

At the word "until" Olga could not longer restrain her emotion and began to cry. Marya followed her example, and Ivan Makaruitch's sister cried also. The old man coughed and fussed about, seeking a present for his grandchild, but he found nothing, and waved his hand. When the reading ended, the visitors dispersed to their homes, deeply touched, and pleased with Olga and Sasha.

As the day was Sunday the family remained in the hut. The old woman, whom husband, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren alike addressed as "grandmother," did everything with her own hands: she lighted the stove, set the samovar; she even worked in the fields; and at the same time growled that she was tortured with work. She tortured herself with dread that the family might eat too much, and took care that her husband and daughters-in-law did not sit with idle hands. Once when she found that the innkeeper's geese had got into her kitchen-garden, she rushed at once out of the house armed with a long stick; and for half an hour screamed piercingly over her cabbages, which were as weak and thin as their owner. Later she imagined that a hawk had swooped on her chickens, and with loud curses she flew to meet the hawk. She lost her temper and growled from morning to night, and often screamed so loudly that passers-by stopped to listen.

Her husband she treated badly, denouncing him sometimes as a lie-abed, sometimes as "cholera." The old man was a hopeless, unsubstantial muzhik, and perhaps, indeed if she had not spurred him on, he would have done no work at all, but sat all day on the stove and talked. He complained to his son at great length of certain enemies in the village and of the wrongs he suffered day by day; and it was tiresome to hear him.

"Yes," he said, putting his arms to his waist. "Yes. A week after Elevation I sold my hay for thirty kopeks a pood. Yes. Good! . . . and this means that one morning I drive my hay cart and interfere with nobody; and suddenly, in an evil moment, I look round, and out of the inn comes the headman, Antip Siedelnikoff 'Where are you driving, old So-and-so?' and bangs me in the ear!"

Kiriak's head ached badly from drink and he was ashamed before his brother.

"It's drink that does it. *Akh,* my Lord God!" he stammered, shaking his big head. "You, brother and you, sister forgive me, for the love of Christ: I feel bad myself."

To celebrate Sunday, they bought herrings at the inn, and made soup of the heads. At midday all sat down to tea and drank until they sweated and, it seemed, swelled up; and when they had drunk the tea they set to on the soup, all eating from the same bowl. The old woman hid away the herrings.

At night a potter baked his pots in the ravine. In the meadow below, the village girls sang in chorus; and some one played a concertina. Beyond the river also glowed a potter's oven, and village girls sang; and from afar the music sounded soft and harmonious. The muzhiks gathered in the inn; they sang tipsily, each a different song; and

the language they used made Olga shudder and exclaim—

"Akh, batiushki!"

She was astonished by the incessant blasphemy, and by the fact that the older men, whose time had nearly come, blasphemed worst of all. And the children and girls listened to this language, and seemed in no way uncomfortable; it was plain they were used to it, and had heard it from the cradle.

Midnight came; the potters' fires on both river-banks went out, but on the meadow below and in the inn the merry-making continued. The old man and Kiriak, both drunk, holding hands, and rolling against one another, came to the shed where Olga lay with Marya.

"Leave her alone!" reasoned the old man. "Leave her. She's not a bad sort. . . . It's a sin. . . ."

"Ma-arya!" roared Kiriak.

"Stop! It's sinful. . . . She's not bad sort."

The two men stood a moment by the shed and went away.

"I love wild flowers . . ." sang the old man in a high, piercing tenor. "I love to pull them in the fields!"

After this he spat, blasphemed, and went into the hut.

CHAPTER IV

DREAMS!

GRANDMOTHER stationed Sasha in the kitchen garden, and ordered her to keep off the geese. It was a hot August day. The innkeeper's geese could get into the kitchen garden by the back way, but at present they were busy picking up oats near the inn and quietly conversing, though the old gander stood aloof, his head raised as if to make sure that grandmother was not coming with her stick. The other geese could also get into the garden; but these were feeding far across the river, and, like a big white garland, stretched across the meadow. Sasha watched a short time, and then got tired, and, seeing no geese in sight, went down to the ravine.

There she saw Motka, Marya's eldest daughter, standing motionless on a big stone, and looking at the church. Marya had borne thirteen children; but only six remained, all girls, and the eldest was eight years old. Barefooted Motka, in her long shirt, stood in the sun; the sun burnt the top of her head, but she took no notice of this, and seemed turned to stone. Sasha stood beside her, and looking at the church, began—

"God lives in the church. People burn lamps and candles, but God has red lamps, green and blue lamps, like eyes. At night God walks about the church, and with him the Holy Virgin, and holy Nicholas . . . toup, toup, toup! . . . The watchman is frightened, terribly! Yes, my heart," she said, imitating her mother. "When the Day of Judgment comes all the churches will be carried to heaven."

"With the bells?" asked Motka in a bass voice, drawling every word.

"With the bells. And on the Day of Judgment good people will go to paradise, and wicked people will burn in fire eternal and unextinguishable, my heart! To mother and Marya God will say, 'You have offended no one, so go to the right, to paradise'; but He'll say to Kiriak and grandmother, 'You go to the left, into the fire!' And

people who eat meat on fast-days will go to the fire too."

She looked up at the sky, opened wide her eyes, and continued—

"Look up at the sky, don't wink . . . and you'll see angels."

Motka looked at the sky, and a minute passed in silence.

"Do you see them?" asked Sasha.

"No," answered Motka in her bass voice.

"But I can. Little angels fly about the sky, with wings . . . little, little, like gnats."

Motka thought, looked at the ground, and asked—

"Will grandmother burn really?"

"She'll burn, my heart."

From the stone to the bottom of the hill was a gentle, even slope covered with green grass so soft that it invited repose. Sasha lay down and slid to the bottom. Motka with a serious, severe face, puffed out her cheeks, lay down, and slid, and as she slid her shirt came up to her shoulders.

"How funny I felt!" said Sasha in delight.

The two children climbed to the top intending to slide down again, but at that moment they heard a familiar, squeaky voice. Terror seized them. Toothless, bony, stooping grandmother, with her short grey hair floating in the wind, armed with the long stick, drove the geese from the kitchen garden, and screamed—

"You've spoiled all the cabbage, accursed; may you choke; threefold anathemas; plagues, there is no peace with you!"

She saw the two girls, threw down her stick, took up a bundle of brushwood, and seizing Sasha's shoulders with fingers dry and hard as tree-forks, began to beat her. Sasha cried from pain and terror; and at that moment a gander, swinging from foot to foot and stretching out its neck, came up and hissed at the old woman; and when he returned to the geese, all welcomed him approvingly: go-go-go! Thereafter grandmother seized and whipped Motka, and again Motka's shirt went over her shoulders. Trembling with terror, crying loudly, Sasha went back to the hut to complain, and after her went Motka, also crying in her bass voice. Her tears were unwiped away, and her face was wet as if she had been in the river.

"Lord in heaven!" cried Olga as they entered the hut. "Mother of God, what's this?"

Sasha began her story, and at that moment, screaming and swearing, in came grandmother. Fekla lost her temper, and the whole hut was given over to noise.

"Never mind, never mind!" consoled Olga, pale and unnerved, stroking Sasha's head. "She's your grandmother; you've no right to be angry. Never mind, child!"

Nikolai, already tortured by the constant shouting, hunger, smell, and smoke, hating and despising poverty, and ashamed of his parents before his wife and child, swung his legs over the stove and said to his mother with an irritable whine—

"You mustn't touch her! You have no right whatever to beat her!"

"*Nu,* you'll choke there on the stove corpse!" cried Fekla angrily. "The devil sent you to us, parasite!"

And Sasha and Motka, and all the

little girls, hid on the stove behind Nikolai's back, and the throbbing of their little hearts was almost heard. In every family with an invalid, long sick and hopeless, there are moments when all, timidly, secretly, at the bottom of their hearts, wish for his death; alone, children always dread the death of any one kin to them, and feel terror at the thought. And now the little girls, with bated breath and mournful faces, looked at Nikolai, and thinking that he would soon die, wanted to cry and say something kindly and compassionate.

Nikolai pressed close to Olga, as if seeking a defender, and said in a soft, trembling voice—

"Olga, my dear, I can stand this no longer. It is beyond my strength. For the love of God, for the love of Christ in heaven, write to your sister, Claudia Abramovna: let her sell or pledge everything, and send us the money to get out of this. O Lord," he cried, with longing, "to look at Moscow again, even with one eye! Even to see it in dreams!"

When evening came and the hut grew dark, all felt such tedium that it was hard to speak. Angry grandmother soaked rye crusts in a bowl, and took an hour to eat them. Marya milked the cow, carried in the milk-pail, and set it down on a bench; and grandmother slowly poured the milk into jugs, pleased at the thought that now at Assumption fast no one would drink milk, and that it would remain whole. But she poured a little, very little, into a saucer for Fekla's youngest. When she and Marya carried the milk to the cellar Motka suddenly started up, climbed down from the stove, and going to the bench poured the saucer of milk into the wooden bowl of crusts.

Grandmother, back in the hut, sat down again to the crusts, and Sasha and Motka, perched on the stove, looked at her, and saw with joy that she was drinking milk during fast time, and therefore would go to hell. Consoled by this, they lay down to sleep; and Sasha, going off to sleep, imagined the terrible chastisement: a big stove, like the potter's, and a black unclean spirit horned like a cow drove grandmother into the stove with a long stick, as she herself had lately driven the geese.

CHAPTER V

FIRE!

On the night of Assumption, at eleven o'clock, the young men and girls playing below in the meadow suddenly cried and shrieked and ran back towards the village. The boys and girls who sat above, on the brink of the ravine, at first could not understand the cause of their cries.

"Fire! Fire!" came from beneath in a despairing scream. "The hut's on fire!"

The boys and girls on the ravine turned their heads and saw a picture terrible and rare. Over one of the farthest thatched huts rose a fathom-high pillar of fire which curled and scattered fountain-wise on all sides showers of bright sparks. And immediately afterwards the whole roof caught fire, and the crackling of burning beams was heard by all.

The moonlight faded, and soon the whole village was bathed in a red, trem-

bling glare; black shadows moved across the ground, and there was a smell of burning. The merry-makers from below, all panting, speechless, shuddering, jostled one another and fell; dazzled by the bright light, they saw nothing, and could not even tell who was who. The sight was terrible; and most terrible of all was that in the smoke above the conflagration fluttered doves, and that the men in the inn, knowing nothing of the fire, continued to sing and play the concertina as if nothing had happened.

"Uncle Semion is burning!" cried a loud, hoarse voice.

Marya with chattering teeth wandered about her hut weeping and wringing her hands, although the fire was far away at the other end of the village; Nikolai came out in his felt boots, and after him the children in their shirts. At the village policeman's hut they beat the alarm. Bem, bem, bem! echoed through the air; and this tireless, repeated sound made the heart sink and the listeners turn cold. The old women stood about with images. From the yards were driven sheep, calves, and cows; and the villagers carried into the street their boxes, sheepskins, and pails. A black stallion, kept apart from the herd because he kicked and injured the horses, found himself in freedom, and neighing loudly, he tore up and down the village, and at last stopped beside a cart and kicked it violently.

In the church beyond the river the fire-alarm was rung.

It was hot all around the burning hut, and in the bright glare even the blades of grass were visible. On a box which the peasants had managed to save sat Semion, a big-nosed, red-headed muzhik, in short coat, with a forage-cap pressed down to his ears; his wife lay on her face on the earth and groaned. A little, big-bearded capless, gnome-like stranger of eighty, evidently partial to fires, wandered around, carrying a white bundle; his bald head reflected the glare. The *starosta,* Antip Siedelnikoff, swarthy and black-haired as a gipsy, went up to the hut with his axe, and for no apparent reason beat in all the windows and began to hack at the steps.

"Women, water!" he roared. "Bring the engine! Look sharp!"

The peasants, fresh from merry-making in the inn, dragged up the fire-engine. All were drunk; they staggered and fell; their expressions were helpless, and tears stood in their eyes.

"Bring water, girls!" cried the *starosta,* also drunk. "Look sharp!"

The young women and girls ran down the slope to the well, returned with pails and pitchers of water, and, having emptied them into the engine, ran back for more. Olga, and Marya, and Sasha, and Motka, all helped. The water was pumped up by women and small boys; the hose-nozzle hissed; and the *starosta,* aiming it now at the door now at the windows, held his finger on the stream of water, so that it hissed still more fiercely.

"Good man, Antip!" came approving cries. "Keep it up!"

And Antip went into the hall and cried thence—

"Bring more water! Do your best Orthodox men and women, on this unfortunate occasion!"

The muzhiks stood in a crowd with

dle hands and gaped at the fire. No one knew what to start on, not one was capable of help; although around were stacks of grain, hay, outhouses, and heaps of dry brushwood. Kiriak and his father Osip, both tipsy, stood n the crowd. As if to excuse his dleness, the old man turned to the woman who lay on the ground and said—

"Don't worry yourself, gossip! The hut's insured—it's all the same to you!"

And Semion, addressing each muzhik in turn, explained how the hut caught fire.

"That old man there with the bundle s General Zhukoff's servant. . . . He was with our general, heaven kingdom o him! as cook. He comes up to us n the evening and begins, 'Let me leep here tonight.' . . . We had a drink each, of course. . . . The woman prepared the samovar to get he old man tea, when in an unlucky moment she put it in the hall; and he fire from the chimney, of course, went up to the roof, the straw and ll! We were nearly burnt ourselves. And the old man lost his cap; it's a ity."

The fire-alarm boomed without ease; and the bells of the church cross the river rang again and again. Olga, panting, bathed in the glare, looked with terror at the red sheep and he red pigeons flying about in the moke; and it seemed to her that the oom of the fire-alarm pierced into her oul, that the fire would last for ever, nd that Sasha was lost. . . . And when he roof crashed in she grew so weak ith fear lest the whole village burn hat she could no longer carry water; and she sat on the brink of the ravine with her pail beside her; beside her sat other women, and spoke as if they were speaking of a corpse.

At last from the manor-house came two cartloads of factors and workmen. They brought with them a fire-engine. A very youthful student in white, unbuttoned tunic rode into the village on horseback. Axes crashed, a ladder was placed against the burning log-walls; and up it promptly climbed five men led by the student, who was very red, and shouted sharply and hoarsely, and in a tone which implied that he was well accustomed to extinguishing fires. They took the hut to pieces, beam by beam; and dragged apart stall, the wattle fence, and the nearest hayrick.

"Don't let them break it!" came angry voices from the crowd. "Don't let them!"

Kiriak with a resolute face went into the hut as if to prevent the new-comers breaking, but one of the workmen turned him back with a blow on the neck. Kiriak tumbled, and on all fours crept back to the crowd.

From across the river came two pretty girls in hats; the student's sisters, no doubt. They stood some way off and watched the conflagration. The scattered logs no longer burned, but smoked fiercely; and the student, handling the hose, sent the water sometimes on the logs, sometimes into the crowd, sometimes at the women who were carrying pails.

"George!" cried the frightened girls reproachfully. "George!"

The fire ended. Before the crowd dispersed the dawn had begun; and all faces were pale and a little dark—or

so it always seems in early morning when the last stars fade away. As they went to their homes the muzhiks laughed and joked at the expense of General Zhukoff's cook and his burnt cap: they reenacted the fire as a joke, and, it seemed, were sorry it had come so quickly to an end.

"You put out the fire beautifully, sir," said Olga to the student. "Quite in the Moscow way; there we have fires every day."

"Are you really from Moscow?" asked one of the girls.

"Yes. My husband served in the Slaviansky Bazaar. And this is my little girl." She pointed to Sasha, who pressed close to her from the cold. "Also from Moscow, miss."

The girls spoke to the student in French, and handed Sasha a twenty-kopeck piece. When old Osip saw this his face grew bright with hope.

"Thank God, your honour, there was no wind," he said, turning to the student. "We'd have been all burnt up in an hour. Your honour, good gentleman," he added shamefacedly. "It's a cold morning; we want warming badly . . . a half a bottle from your kindness . . ."

Osip's hint proved vain; and, grunting, he staggered home. Olga stood at the end of the village and watched as the two carts forded the stream, and the pretty girls walked through the meadow towards the carriage waiting on the other side. She turned to the hut in ecstasies—

"And such nice people! So good-looking. The young ladies, just like little cherubs!"

"May they burst asunder!" growled sleepy Fekla angrily.

CHAPTER VI

THE HUT

Marya was unhappy, and said that she wanted to die. But life as she found it was quite to Fekla's taste: she liked the poverty, and the dirt, and the never-ceasing bad language. She ate what she was given without picking and choosing, and could sleep comfortably anywhere; she emptied the slops in front of the steps: threw them, in fact, from the threshold, though in her own naked feet she had to walk through the puddle. And from the first day she hated Olga and Nikolai for no reason save that they loathed this life.

"We'll see what you're going to eat here, my nobles from Moscow!" she said maliciously. "We'll see!"

Once on an early September morning, Fekla, rosy from the cold, healthy, and good-looking, carried up the hill two pails of water; when she entered the hut Marya and Alga sat at the table and drank tea.

"Tea . . . and sugar!" began Fekla ironically. "Fine ladies you are!" she added, setting down the pails. "A nice fashion you've got of drinking tea every day! See that you don't swell up with tea!" she continued, looking with hatred at Olga. "You got a thick snout already in Moscow, fatbeef!"

She swung round the yoke and struck Olga on the shoulder. The two women clapped their hands and exclaimed—

"Akh, batiushki!"

After which Fekla returned to the river to wash clothes, and all the time cursed so loudly that she was heard in the hut.

The day passed, and behind it came the long autumn evening. All sat wind-

ing silk, except Fekla, who went down to the river. The silk was given out by a neighbouring factory; and at this work the whole family earned not more than twenty kopecks a week.

"We were better off as serfs," said the old man, winding away busily. "In those days you'd work, and eat, and sleep . . . each in its turn. For dinner you'd have *schtchi* and porridge, and for supper again *schtchi* and porridge. Gherkins and cabbage as much as you liked; and you'd eat freely, as much as you liked. And there was more order. Each man knew his place."

The one lamp in the hut burned dimly and smoked. When any worker rose and passed the lamp a black shadow fell on the window, and the bright moonlight shone in. Old Osip related slowly how the peasants lived before the Emancipation; how in these same villages where all to-day lived penuriously there were great shooting parties, and on such days the muzhiks were treated to vodka without end; how whole trains of carts with game for the young squire were hurried off to Moscow; how the wicked were punished with rods or exiled to the estate in Tver, and the good were rewarded. And grandmother also spoke. She remembered everything. She told of her old mistress, a good, God-fearing woman with a wicked, dissolute husband; and of the queer marriages made by all the daughters; one, it appeared, married a drunkard; another a petty tradesman; and the third was carried off clandestinely (she, grandmother, then unmarried, helped in the adventure): and all soon afterwards died of grief as died, indeed, their mother. And, remembering these events, grandmother began to cry.

When a knock was heard at the door all started.

"Uncle Osip, let me stay the night!"

Into the hut came the little, bald old man, General Zhukoff's cook, whose cap was burnt in the fire. He sat and listened, and, like his hosts, related many strange happenings. Nikolai, his legs hanging over the stove, listened; and asked what sort of food was eaten at the manor-house. They spoke of *bitki*, cutlets, soups of various kinds, and sauces; and the cook, who, too, had an excellent memory, named certain dishes which no one eats nowadays; there was a dish, for instance, made of ox-eyes, and called "Awake in the morning."

"And did you cook cutlets *maréchal?*" asked Nikolai.

"No."

Nikolai shook his head reproachfully, and said—

"Then you are a queer sort of cook."

The little girls sat and lay on the stove, and looked down with widely opened eyes; there seemed to be no end to them—like cherubs in the sky. The stories delighted them; they sighed, shuddered, and turned pale sometimes from rapture, sometimes from fear; and, breathless, afraid to move, they listened to the stories of their grandmother, which were the most interesting of all.

They went to bed in silence; and the old men, agitated by their stories, thought how glorious was youth, which —however meagre it might be—left behind it only joyful, living, touching recollections; and how terribly cold was this death, which was now so near. Better not think of it! The lamp went out. And the darkness, the two windows,

bright with moonshine, the silence, the cradle's creak somehow reminded them that life was now past, and that it would never return. They slumbered, lost consciousness; then suddenly some one jostled their shoulders, or breathed into their cheeks—and there was no real sleep; through their heads crept thoughts of death; they turned round and forgot about death; but their heads were full of old, mean, tedious thoughts, thoughts of need, of forage, of the rise in the price of flour; and again they remembered that life had now passed by, and that it would never return.

"O Lord!" sighed the cook.

Some one tapped cautiously at the window. That must be Fekla. Olga rose, yawned, muttered a prayer, opened the inner door, then drew the bolt in the hall. But no one entered. A draught blew and the moon shone brightly. Through the open door, Olga saw the quiet and deserted street, and the moon itself, swimming high in the sky.

"Who's there?" she cried.

"I!" came a voice. "It's I."

Near the door, pressing close to the wall, stood Fekla, naked as she was born. She shuddered from the cold, her teeth chattered; and in the bright moonlight she was pale, pretty, and strange. The patches of shade and the moonlight on her skin stood out sharply; and plainest of all stood out her dark eyebrows and her young, firm breast.

"Some impudent fellows across the river undressed me and sent me off in this way—as my mother bore me! Bring me something to put on."

"Go into the hut yourself!" whispered Olga, with a shudder.

"The old ones will see me."

And as a fact grandmother got restless, and growled; and the old man asked, "Who is there?" Olga brought out her shirt and petticoat and dressed Fekla; and the two women softly, and doing their best to close the doors without noise, went into the hut.

"So that's you, devil?" came an angry growl from grandmother, who guessed it was Fekla. "May you be . . . night walker . . . there's no peace with you!"

"Don't mind, don't mind," whispered Olga, wrapping Fekla up. "Don't mind my heart!"

Again silence. The whole family always slept badly; each was troubled by something aggressive and insistent: the old man by a pain in the back; grandmother by worry and ill-temper; Marya by fright; the children by itching and hunger. And to-night the sleep of all was troubled; they rolled from side to side, wandered, and rose constantly to drink.

Fekla suddenly cried out in a loud rough voice; but soon mastered herself and merely sobbed quietly until at last she ceased. Now and then from beyond the river were heard the church chimes; but the clock struck strangely; and at first beat struck five, and later three.

"O Lord!" sighed the cook.

From the light in the windows it was hard to judge whether the moon still shone or whether dawn had come. Marya rose and went out; and she was heard milking the cows and shouting "Stand!" Grandmother also went out. It was still dark in the hut, but everything could be seen.

Nikolai, who had spent a sleepless night, climbed down from the stove. He took from a green box his evening dress

coat, put it on, and going over to the window, smoothed the sleeves and the folds, and smiled. Then he took off the coat, returned it to the box, and lay down.

Marya returned, and began to light the stove. Apparently she was not yet quite awake. Probably she still dreamed of something, or recalled the stories of last night, for she stretched herself lazily before the stove and said—

"No, we're better in freedom."

CHAPTER VII

WHO ELSE?

In the village arrived "the gentleman," as the peasants called the superintendent of police. Every one knew a week ahead the day and cause of his arrival. For though Zhukovo had only forty houses, it owed in arrears to the Imperial Treasury and the Zemstvo more than two thousand roubles.

The superintendent stopped at the inn, drank two glasses of tea, and then walked to the *starosta's* hut, where already waited a crowd of peasants in arrears. The *starosta,* Antip Siedelnikoff, despite his youth—he was little over thirty—was a stern man who always took the side of the authorities, although he himself was poor and paid his taxes irregularly. It was clear to all that he was flattered by his position and revelled in the sense of power, which he had no other way of displaying save by sternness. The *mir* feared and listened to him; when in the street or at the inn he met a drunken man he would seize him, tie his hands behind his back, and put him in the village goal; once, indeed, he even imprisoned grandmother for several days, because. appearing at the *mir* instead of her husband, she used abusive language. The *starosta* had never lived in town and read no books; but he had a copious collection of learned words and used them so liberally that people respected him, even when they did not understand.

When Osip with his tax book entered the *starosta's* hut, the superintendent, a thin, old, grey-whiskered man in a grey coat, sat at a table in the near corner and made notes in a book. The hut was clean, the walls were decorated with pictures from magazines, and in a prominent place near the ikon hung a portrait of Alexander of Battenberg, ex-Prince of Bulgaria. At the table, with crossed arms, stood Antip Siedelnikoff.

"This man, your honour, owes 119 roubles," he said when it came to Osip's turn. "Before Holy Week, he paid a rouble, since then, nothing."

The superintendent turned his eyes on Osip, and asked—

"What's the reason of that, brother?"

"Your honour, be merciful to me . . ." began Osip in agitation. "Let me explain . . . this summer . . . Squire Liutoretzky . . . 'Osip,' he says, 'sell me your hay. . . . Sell it,' he says. . . . I had a hundred poods for sale, which the women mowed. . . . Well, we bargained. . . . All went well, without friction. . . ."

He complained of the *starosta,* and now and again turned to the muzhiks as if asking for support; his flushed face sweated, and his eyes turned bright and vicious.

"I don't understand why you tell me all that," said the superintendent. "I ask *you* . . . it's *you* I ask, why you don't pay your arrears? None of you pay, and I am held responsible."

"I'm not able to."

"These expressions are without consequence, your honour," said the *starosta* magniloquently. "In realty, the Tchikildeyeffs belong to the impoverished class, but be so good as to ask the others what is the reason. Vodka and impudence . . . without any comprehension."

The superintendent made a note, and said to Osip in a quiet, even voice, as if he were asking for water—

"Begone!"

Soon afterwards he drove away; and as he sat in his cheap tarantass and coughed, it was plain, even from the appearance of his long, thin back, that he had forgotten Osip, and the *starosta*, and the arrears of Zhukovo, and was thinking of his own domestic affairs. He had hardly covered a verst before Antip Siedelnikoff was carrying off the Tchikildeyeff samovar; and after him ran gradmother, and whined like a dog.

"I won't give it! I won't give it to you, accursed!"

The *starosta* walked quickly, taking big steps; and grandmother, stooping and fierce and breathless, tottered after him; and her green-grey hair floated in the wind. At last she stopped, beat her breast with her fists, and exclaimed, with a whine and a sob—

"Orthodox men who believe in God! *Batiushki*, they're wronging me! Kinsmen, they've robbed me. Oi, oi, will no one help me!"

"Grandmother, grandmother!" said the *starosta* severely, "have some reason in your head!"

With the loss of the samovar, things in the Tchikildeyeffs' hut grew even worse. There was something humiliating and shameful in this last privation, and it seemed that the hut had suddenly lost its honour. The table itself, the chairs, and all the pots, had the *starosta* seized them, would have been less missed. Grandmother screamed, Marya cried, and the children, listening, began to cry also. The old man, with a feeling of guilt, sat gloomily in the corner and held his tongue. And Nikolai was silent. As a rule grandmother liked him and pitied him; but at this crisis her pity evaporated, and she cursed and reproached him, and thrust her fists under his nose. She screamed that he was guilty of the family's misfortunes and asked why he had sent so little home, though he boasted in his letters that he earned fifty roubles a month at the Slaviansky Bazaar. Why did he come home, and still worse, bring his family? If he died whence would the money come for his funeral? . . . And it was painful to look at Nikolai, Olga and Sasha.

The old man grunted, took his cap, and went to the *starosta's*. It was getting dark. Antip Siedelnikoff, with cheeks puffed out, stood at the stove and soldered. It was stifling. His children, skinny and unwashed—not better than the Tchkildeyeffs'—sprawled on the floor; his ugly, freckled wife wound silk. This, too, was an unhappy, God-forsaken family; alone Antip was smart and good-looking. On a bench in a row stood five samovars. The old man prayed towards the Battenberg prince, and began—

"Antip, show the mercy of God: give me the samovar! For the love of God!"

"Bring me three roubles, and then you'll get it."

"I haven't got them."

Antip puffed out his cheeks, the fire hummed and hissed, and the samovars

shone. The old man fumbled with his cap, thought a moment, and repeated—

"Give it to me!"

The swarthy *starosta* seemed quite black and resembled a wizard; he turned to Osip and said roughly and quickly—

"All depends from the Rural Chief. In the administrative session of the twenty-sixth of this month you can expose the causes of your dissatisfaction verbally or in writing."

Not one of these learned words was understood by Osip, but he felt contented, and returned to his hut.

Ten days later the superintendent returned, stayed about an hour, and drove away. It had turned windy and cold, but though the river was frozen, there was no snow, and the state of the roads was a torture to every one. On Sunday evening the neighbours looked in to see and talk with Osip. They spoke in the darkness; to work was a sin, and no one lighted the lamp. News was exchanged, chiefly disagreeable. Three houses away the hens had been taken in payment of arrears and sent to the cantonal office, and there they died of starvation; sheep had also been taken, and while they were being driven away tied with ropes and transferred to fresh carts at each village one had died. And now they discussed the question, Who was responsible?

"The Zemstvo!" said Osip. "Who else?"

"Of course, the Zemstvo!"

They accused the Zemstvo of everything—of arrears, of oppression, of famines, although not one of them knew exactly what the Zemstvo was. And that rule had been observed since wealthy peasants with factories, shops, and houses were elected as Zemstvo members, and being discontented with the institution, thenceforth in their factories and inns abused the Zemstvo.

They complained of the fact that God had sent no snow, and that though it was time to lay in firewood, you could neither drive nor walk upon the frozen roads. Fifteen years before, and earlier, the small-talk of Zhukovo was infinitely more entertaining. In those days every old man pretended he held some secret, knew something, and waited for something; they talked of rescripts with gold seals, redistribution of lands, and hidden treasures, and hinted of things mysterious; to-day the people of Zhukovo had no secrets; their life was open to all; and they had no themes for conversation save need, and forage, and the absence of snow. . . .

For a moment they were silent. But soon they remembered the hens and dead sheep, and returned to the problem, Who was responsible?

"The Zemstvo!" said Osip gloomily. "Who else?"

CHAPTER VIII

DIED

THE parish church was Kosogorovo, six versts away, but the peasants went there only to christen, marry, or bury; they worshipped at the church across the river. On Sundays, when the weather was fine, the village girls dressed in their best and went in a crowd to the service; and the red, yellow, and green dresses fluttering across the meadow were pleasant to see. In bad weather all stayed at home. They fasted, prayed, and prepared for the sacrament. From those who had failed in this duty during the Great Fast, the priest, when he went

round the huts with his crucifix, took fifteen kopecks fine.

The old man did not believe in God, because he had hardly ever thought of Him; he admitted the supernatural, but held that that was an affair for women; and when others spoke of religion, or of miracles, and asked him questions on the subject, he scratched himself and said reluctantly—

"Who knows anything about it?"

Grandmother believed vaguely; in her mind all things were confused, and when she began to meditate on death and salvation, hunger and poverty took the upper hand, and she forgot her meditations. She remembered no prayers, but at night before lying down she stood before the ikons and muttered—

"Mother of God of Kazan, Mother of God of Smolensk, Three-Handed Mother of God! . . ."

Marya and Fekla crossed themselves and fasted, but knew nothing of religion. They neither taught their children to pray nor spoke to them of God; and they taught them no principles save that they must not eat meat during fasts. With the other villagers it was the same; few believed and few understood. Nevertheless, all loved the Scriptures, loved them dearly and piously; the misfortune was that there were no books and no one to read and explain, so that when Olga read aloud the Gospel she was treated with respect, and all addressed her and her daughter Sasha as "You."

At Church festivals Olga often walked to neighbouring villages, and even to the district town, where there were two monasteries and twenty-seven churches. She was abstracted, and as she walked on her pilgrimage forgot her family. When she returned home it seemed that she had only just discovered her husband and daughter, and she smiled and said radiantly—

"God has sent us His mercy!"

Everything that happened in the village repelled and tormented her. On Elijah's Day they drank, at Assumption they drank, at Elevation they drank. At Intercession Zhukovo had its parish festival; and this the muzhiks observed by drinking for three days; they drank fifty roubles from the communal funds; and then went round the huts and collected money for more vodka. On the first days the Tchikildeyeffs killed a ram, and ate mutton in the morning, at dinner, and for supper; and in the night all the children got out of bed to eat more. Kiriak was drunk all three days; he drank away his cap and boots, and beat Marya so badly that she had to be soused with water. And then all were sick with shame.

Despite this, even this Zhukovo, this Kholuefka, had once a real religious festival. That was in August, when through every village in the district was borne the Life-giving Ikon. The day it was due at Zhukovo was windless and dull. Early in the morning the village girls, in their bright, holiday dress, set out to met the ikon, which arrived at evening with a procession and singing; and at that moment the church bells rang loudly. A vast crowd from Zhukovo and neighbouring villages filled the street; there were noise, dust, and crushing. And the old man, grandmother, and Kiriak—all stretched out their hands to the ikon, looked at it greedily, and cried with tears—

"Intercessor, Mother! Intercessor!"

All at once, it seemed, realised that

there is no void between earth and heaven, that the great and strong of this world have not seized upon everything, that there is intercession against injury, against slavish subjection, against heavy, intolerable need, against the terrible vodka.

"Intercessor, Mother!" sobbed Marya. "Mother!"

When the service was said and the ikon carried away, all things were as of old, and noisy, drunken voices echoed from the inn.

Death was dreaded only by the wealthy muzhiks; the richer they grew the less their faith in God and in salvation; and only out of fear of the end of the world, to make certain, so to speak, they lighted candles in the church and said mass. The poorer muzhiks knew no fear of death. They told the old man and grandmother to their faces that they had lived their day, that it was high time to die, and the old man and grandmother listened indifferently. They did not scruple to tell Fekla in Nikolai's presence that when he, Nikolai, died, her husband, Denis, would get his discharge from the army and be sent home. And Marya not only had no fear of death, but was even sorry that it lingered; and she rejoiced when her own children died.

But though they knew no dread of death, they looked on sickness with exaggerated dread. The most trifling ailment, a disordered stomach, a slight chill, sent grandmother on to the stove, where she rolled herself up, and groaned loudly without cease, "I'm dying!" And the old man would send for the priest to confess her and administer the last sacrament. They talked eternally of colds, of worms, of tumours which begin in the stomach and slowly creep towards the heart. Most of all they dreaded colds, and even in summer dressed warmly, and cowered over the stove. Grandmother loved medical treatment, and constantly drove to hospital, where she said she was fifty-eight instead of seventy, for she feared that if the doctor knew her age, he would refuse to treat her, and would tell her it was time to die. She usually started for the hospital at early morning, taking a couple of the little girls, and returned at night, hungry and ill-tempered, with a mixture for herself and ointments for the girls. Once she took with her Nikolai, who for the next two weeks dosed himself with a mixture and said that he felt better.

Grandmother knew every doctor, *feldscher,* and wise-woman within thirty versts and disapproved of all. At Intercession, when the priest made his round of the huts with a crucifix, the clerk told her that near the town prison there was an old man, formerly an army *feldscher,* who doctored cleverly, and he advised grandmother to see him. She took the advice. When the first snow fell she drove into town, and brought back an old, bearded Jew in a long caftan, whose whole face was covered with blue veins. At that time journeymen worked in the hut: an old tailor in terrifying spectacles made a waistcoat out of rags; and two young lads made felt for top-boots. Kiriak, dismissed for drunkenness, and now living at home, sat beside the tailor and mended a horse-collar. The hut was close and smoky. The Jew looked at Nikolai, and said that he must be bled.

He applied leeches, and the old tailor, Kiriak, and the little girls looked on.

and imagined they saw the disease coming out of Nikolai. And Nikolai also watched the leeches sucking his chest, and saw them fill with dark blood; and feeling that, indeed, something was coming out of him, he smiled contentedly.

"It's a good way!" said the tailor. "God grant that it does him good!"

The Jew applied twelve leeches to Nikolai, then twelve more; drank tea, and drove away. Nikolai began to tremble; his face turned haggard, and—as the women put it—dwindled into a fist; his fingers turned blue. He wrapped himself up in the counterpane and then in a sheepskin coat; but felt colder and colder. Towards evening he was peevish; asked them to lay him on the floor, asked the tailor not to smoke, then lay still under the sheepskin; and towards morning died.

CHAPTER IX

GIVE ALMS!

It was a rough, a long winter.

Since Christmas there had been no grain, and flour was bought outside. Kiriak, who still lived at home, made scenes at night, causing terror to all; and next morning his head ached, and he was ashamed, so that it was painful to see him. Night and day in the stall a hungry cow lowed, and rent the hearts of grandmother and Marya. And to make things worse the frost grew severer, and the snow heaped itself high in the street, and the winter stretched out. Annunciation was marked by a genuine winter snowstorm, and snow fell in Holy Week.

But even this ended. The beginning of April brought warm days and frosty nights. Winter gave way reluctantly, but the hot sunshine foiled him, and at last the brooks melted and the birds began to sing. The fields and shrubs by the river-side were hidden in spring floods, and from Zhukovo to the village beyond stretched a big lake, given over to wild duck. The spring sunsets, fiery and with splendid clouds, yielded each day sights new and incredible, sights which are often laughed at when they appear on canvas.

The cranes cried mournfully, as if they called on men to follow them. Standing on the brink of the ravine, Olga looked at the flood, at the sun, at the bright, it seemed rejuvenated, church; and her tears flowed and she panted with passionate longing to go away, though it might be to the end of the earth. And indeed, it was decided that she should return to Moscow and seek a place as housemaid; and with her would go Kiriak to earn his living as dvornik, or somehow else. *Akh,* to get away soon!

When the roads dried and the weather turned hot they prepared for the journey. Olga and Sasha with wallets on their backs, both in bast-shoes, left at dawn; and Marya came to see them off. Kiriak, ill, remained for a week more. For the last time Olga prayed towards the church, and thought of her husband, and though she did not cry, her face wrinkled, and seemed ugly, as an old woman's. During the winter she had grown thinner, uglier, and a little grey; instead of the old charm and pleasant smile her face expressed submissiveness and sorrow outlived; and her look was dull and fixed as if she were deaf. She was sorry to leave the village and the muzhiks. She remem-

bered how they carried away Nikolai; how mass was said at nearly every hut; and how all wept, feeling her grief their own. Summer and winter there were hours and days when it seemed to her that these men lived worse than beasts, and to look at them was terrible: they were coarse, dishonest, dirty, drunken; they lived in discord; they fought eternally, because they despised, feared, and suspected one another. Who kept the drink shop and dosed the muzhik with drink? The muzhik. Who squandered and spent on drink the money of the commune, of the school, of the Church? The muzhik. Who stole from his neighbour, burnt his house, perjured himself in court for a bottle of vodka? The muzhik. Who first spoke at the Zemstvo and on other boards against the muzhik? The muzhik. Yes; to live with them was torture! But despite all this, they were men, they suffered and wept as men; and in their whole lives there was not one act for which an excuse might not be found. Labour unbearable, from which the whole body ached at night, fierce winters, scanty harvests, crowding; help from nowhere, and no hope of help! The richer and the stronger gave no help because they themselves were rude, dishonest, intemperate, and foul-tongued; the pettiest official or clerk treated the muzhiks as vagabonds; even the cantonal chiefs and Church elders addressed them as "Thou," and believed they had a right thereto. Yes! And could there be help or good example from the selfish, the greedy, the dissolute, the idle, who came to these villages with but one intent: to insult, terrify, and rob? Olga remembered the piteous, humiliated faces of the old men when in winter Kiriak was brought out to be flogged! And now she was sorry for all these men and women; and on her last walk through the village she looked at every hut.

When she had accompanied them three versts Marya said good-bye; then fell upon her knees, and with her face touching the ground, cried loudly—

"Again I am left alone; alas, poor me, poor, poor, unfortunate! . . ."

And she continued to keen, so that long afterwards Olga and Sasha could see her on her knees, bent on one side, holding her head with her hands. And above her head flew rooks.

The sun rose higher: the day grew warm. Zhukovo was left far behind. The travellers followed many circuitous paths, and Olga and Sasha soon forgot the village and Marya. They were in good humour, and everything amused them. First a mound; then a line of telegraph posts, with mysterious humming wires, which vanished on the horizon, and sped to some unknown destination; then a farm, buried in green, which sent from afar a smell of dampness and hemp, and seemed to say that it was the home of happy people; then a horse's skeleton lying white in a field. And larks sang untiredly; quails cried to one another; and the landrail cried with a sound like the drawing of an old bolt.

At midday Olga and Sasha reached a big village, and, in the broad street, came upon General Zhukoff's old cook. He was hot, and his red, sweating bald patch shone in the sun. At first he did not recognise Olga; then he looked and recognised her, but both, without

exchanging a word, continued their paths. Olga stopped and bowed low before the open windows of a hut which seemed richer and newer than its neighbours, and cried in a loud, thin, and singing voice—

"Orthodox Christians, give alms for the love of Christ; Kingdom of Heaven to your father and mother, eternal rest."

"Orthodox Christians," echoed little Sasha. "Give for the love of Christ. Heavenly Kingdom. . . ."

The Shooting Party

PRESCRIPT

In the year 1880 during April the doorman Andrey came to my private room and in a mysterious whisper said that a gentleman was demanding insistently to see the editor.

"He appears to be a chinovnik," Andrey added. "He has a cockade. . . ."

"Tell him to come another time," I said, "I am busy now. Tell him the editor only talks on Saturdays."

"He was here the day before yesterday and asked for you. He says his business is urgent. He begs, almost with tears in his eyes, to see you and says he is not free on Saturday. . . ."

I sighed, laid down my pen, and settled myself in my chair to receive the gentleman with the cockade. Young authors, and in general everybody who is new to the profession, are generally so awed by the words "editorial office" that they delay a considerable time. After the editor's "Show him in," they cough and blow their noses a long time, open the door very slowly, come into the room still more slowly, and thus waste your time. The gentleman with the cockade was different. The door had scarcely had time to close after Andrey before I saw a tall, broad-shouldered man, a paper in one hand and a cap with a cockade in the other, facing me.

This man of the interview plays a very important part in my story. I shall describe him.

First, he was as vigorous as a fine cart horse. His face was rosy, his hands strong, his chest deep. Over forty, dressed according to the last fashion, in tweed. A thick gold watch-chain with breloques decorated his chest, and on his little finger a diamond ring shone. But, what is most important, and so essential to the hero of a novel or story of any repute, he was extraordinarily handsome. I am neither a woman nor an artist and have but little understanding of manly beauty, but the appearance of the gentleman with the cockade with his large muscular face remained for ever impressed on me. A real Greek nose with a slight hook, thin lips and blue eyes of virtue and something else of mystery. That "something" can be seen in the eyes of little animals when they are sad or ill. Something imploring, childish, resignedly suffering. . . . Clever people never have such eyes.

His whole face seemed to breathe candour and sincerity. If it be true that the face is the mirror of the soul, I could have taken an oath from the very first day of my acquaintance with the gentleman with the cockade that he was unable to lie. I might even have gambled upon it. Whether I should have lost or not, the reader will see later.

His chestnut hair and beard were thick and soft as silk, and soft hair is the sign of a sweet, sensitive soul. Criminals and abandoned characters have, in most cases, harsh hair. If this be true or not the reader will also see

further on. Neither the expression of his face, nor the softness of his beard was as soft and delicate in this gentleman with the cockade as the movements of his huge form. These movements seemed to denote education, lightness, grace, and if you will forgive the expression, something womanly. It would cause my hero but a slight effort to bend a horseshoe or to flatten out a tin sardine box, with his first and at the same time not one of his movements showed his physical strength. He took hold of the door handle or of his hat, as if they were butterflies—delicately, carefully, hardly touching them with his fingers. He walked noiselessly, he pressed my hand feebly. When looking at him you forgot that he was as strong as Goliath, and that he could lift with one hand weights that five men like our office servant Andrey could not have moved. Looking at his light movements, it was impossible to believe that he was strong and heavy. Spencer might have called him a model of grace.

When he entered my office he became confused. His delicate, sensitive nature was probably shocked by my frowning, dissatisfied face.

"For God's sake forgive me!" he began in a soft, mellow baritone voice. "I have broken in upon you not at the appointed time, and I have forced you to make an exception for me. You are very busy! But, Mr. Editor, you see, this is how the case stands. To-morrow I must start for Odessa on very important business. . . . If I had been able to put off this journey till Saturday, I can assure you I would not have asked you to make this exception for me. I submit to rules because I love order. . . ."

"How much he talks!" I thought as I stretched out my hand towards the pen, showing by this movement I was pressed for time. (I was terribly bored by visitors just then.)

"I will only take up a moment of your time," my hero continued in an apologetic tone. "But first allow me to introduce myself. . . . Ivan Petrovich Kamyshev, Bachelor of Law and former examining magistrate. I have not the honour of belonging to the fellowship of authors, nevertheless I appear before you from motives that are purely those of a writer. Notwithstanding his forty years, you have before you a man who wishes to be a beginner. . . . Better late than never!"

"Very pleased. . . . What can I do for you?"

The man wishing to be a beginner sat down and continued, looking at the floor with his imploring eyes:

"I have brought you a short story which I would like to see published in your journal. Mr. Editor, I will tell you quite candidly I have not written this story to attain an author's celebrity, nor for the sake of sweet-sounding words. I am too old for these good things. I venture on the writer's path from purely commercial motives. . . . I want to earn something. . . . At the present moment I have absolutely no occupation. I was a magistrate in the S—— district for more than five years, but I did not make a fortune, nor did I keep my innocence either. . . ."

Kamyshev glanced at me with his kind eyes and laughed gently.

"Service is tiresome. . . . I served and served till I was quite fed up, and chucked it. I have no occupation now, sometimes I have nothing to eat. . . .

If, despite its unworthiness, you will publish my story, you will do me more than a great favour. . . . You will help me. . . . A journal is not an alms-house, nor an old-age asylum. . . . I know that, but . . . won't you be so kind. . . ."

"He is lying," I thought.

The breloques and the diamond ring on his little finger belied his having written for the sake of a piece of bread. Besides, a slight cloud passed over Kamyshev's face such as only an experienced eye can trace on the faces of people who seldom lie.

"What is the subject of your story?" I asked.

"The subject? What can I tell you? The subject is not new. . . . Love and murder. . . . But read it, you will see. . . . 'From the Notes of an Examining Magistrate.' . . ."

I probably frowned, for Kamyshev looked confused, his eyes began to blink, he started and continued speaking rapidly:

"My story is written in the conventional style of former examining magistrates, but . . . you will find in it facts, the truth. . . . All that is written, from beginning to end, happened before my eyes. . . . Indeed, I was not only a witness but one of the actors."

"The truth does not matter. . . . It is not absolutely necessary to see a thing to describe it. That is unimportant. The fact is our poor readers have long been fed up with Gaboriau and Shklyarevsky. They are tired of all those mysterious murders, those artful devices of the detectives, and the extraordinary resourcefulness of the examining magistrate. The reading public, of course, varies, but I am talking of the public that reads our newspaper. What is the title of your story?"

"The Shooting Party."

"Hm! . . . That's not serious, you know. . . . And, to be quite frank with you, I have such an amount of copy on hand that it is quite impossible to accept new things, even if they are of undoubted merit."

"Pray accept my work, . . . You say it is not serious, but . . . it is difficult to give a title to a thing before you have seen it. . . . Besides, is it possible you cannot admit that an examining magistrate can write serious works?"

All this Kamyshev said stammeringly, twisting a pencil about between his fingers and looking at his feet. He finished by blinking his eyes and becoming exceedingly confused. I was sorry for him.

"All right, leave it," I said. "But I can't promise that your story will be read very soon. You will have to wait. . . ."

"How long?"

"I don't know. Look in . . . in about two to three months. . . ."

"That's pretty long. . . . But I dare not insist. . . . Let it be as you say. . . ."

Kamyshev rose and took up his cap.

"Thank you for the audience," he said. "I will now go home and dwell in hope. Three months of hope! However, I am boring you. I have the honour to bid you good-bye!"

"One word more, please," I said as I turned over the pages of his thick copy-book, which were written in a very small handwriting. "You write here in the first person. . . . You therefore mean the examining magistrate to be yourself?"

"Yes, but under another name. The

part I play in this story is somewhat scandalous. . . . It would have been awkward to give my own name. . . . In three months, then?"

"Yes, not earlier, please. . . . Goodbye!"

The former examining magistrate bowed gallantly, turned the door handle gingerly, and disappeared, leaving his work on my writing table. I took up the copy-book and put it away in the table drawer.

Handsome Kamyshev's story reposed in my table drawer for two months. One day, when leaving my office to go to the country, I remembered it and took it with me.

When I was seated in the railway coach I opened the copy-book and began to read from the middle. The middle interested me. That same evening, notwithstanding my want of leisure, I read the whole story from the beginning to the words "The End," which were written with a great flourish. That night I read the whole story through again, and at sunrise I was walking about the terrace from corner to corner, rubbing my temples as if I wanted to rub out of my head some new and painful thoughts that had suddenly entered my mind. . . . The thoughts were really painful, unbearably sharp. It appeared to me that I, neither an examining magistrate nor even a psychological juryman, had discovered the terrible secret of a man, a secret that did not concern me in the slightest degree. I paced the terrace and tried to persuade myself not to believe in my discovery. . . .

Kamyshev's story did not appear in my newspaper for reasons that I will explain at the end of my talk with the reader. I shall meet the reader once again. Now, when I am leaving him for a long time, I offer Kamyshev's story for his perusal.

This story is not remarkable in any way. It has many lengthy passages and many inequalities. . . . The author is too fond of effects and strong expressions. . . . It is evident that he is writing for the first time, his hand is unaccustomed, uneducated. Nevertheless, his narrative reads easily. There is a plot, a meaning, too, and what is most important, it is original, very characteristic and what may be called *sui generis*. It also possesses certain literary qualities. It is worth reading. Here it is.

THE NARRATIVE

(*From the Notebook of an Examining Magistrate*)

CHAPTER I

CRIES!

"THE husband killed his wife! Oh, how stupid you are! Give me some sugar!"

These cries awoke me. I stretched myself, feeling indisposition and heaviness in every limb. One can lie upon one's legs or arms until they are numb, but now it seemed to me that my whole body, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, was benumbed. An afternoon snooze in a sultry, dry atmosphere amid the buzzing and humming of flies and mosquitoes does not act in an invigorating manner but has an enervating effect. Broken and bathed in perspiration, I rose and went to the window. The sun was still high and baked with the same ardour it had done three hours before. Many hours still

remained until sunset and the coolness of the evening.

"The husband killed his wife!"

"Stop lying, Ivan Dem'yanych!" I said as I gave a slight tap to Ivan Dem'yanych's nose. "Husbands kill their wives only in novels and in the tropics, where African passions boil over, my dear. For us such horrors as thefts and burglaries or people living on false passports are quite enough."

"Thefts and burglaries!" Ivan Dem'yanych murmured through his hooked nose. "Oh, how stupid you are!"

"What's to be done, my dear? In what way are we mortals to blame for our brain having its limits? Besides, Ivan Dem'yanych, it is no sin to be a fool in such a temperature. You're my clever darling, but doubtless your brain, too, gets addled and stupid in such heat."

My parrot is not called Polly or by any other of the names given to birds, but he is called Ivan Dem'yanych. He got this name quite by chance. One day, when my man Polycarp was cleaning the cage, he suddenly made a discovery without which my noble bird would still have been called Polly. My lazy servant was suddenly blessed with the idea that my parrot's beak was very like the nose of our village shopkeeper, Ivan Dem'yanych, and from that time the name and patronymic of our long-nosed shopkeeper stuck to my parrot. From that day Polycarp and the whole village christened my extraordinary bird "Ivan Dem'yanych." By Polycarp's will the bird became a personage, and the shopkeeper lost his own name, and to the end of his days he will be known among the villagers under the nickname of the "magistrate's parrot."

I had bought Ivan Dem'yanych from the mother of my predecessor, the examining magistrate, Pospelov, who had died shortly before my appointment. I bought him together with some old oak furniture, various rubbishy kitchen utensils, and in general the whole of the household gods that remained after the deceased. My walls are still decorated with photographs of his relatives, and the portrait of the former occupant is still hanging above my bed. The departed, a lean, muscular man with a red moustache and a thick under-lip, sits looking at me with staring eyes from his faded nutwood frame all the time I am lying on his bed. . . . I had not taken down a single photograph, I had left the house just as I found it. I am too lazy to think of my own comfort, and I don't prevent either corpses or living men from hanging on my walls if the latter wish to do so.*

Ivan Dem'yanych found it as sultry as I did. He fluffed out his feathers, spread his wings, and shrieked out the phrases he had been taught by my predecessor, Pospelov, and by Polycarp. To occupy in some way my after-dinner leisure, I sat down in front of the cage and began to watch the movements of my parrot, who was industriously trying, but without success, to escape from the torments he suffered from the suffocating heat and the insects that dwelt among his feathers.

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*I beg the reader to excuse such expressions. Kamyshev's story is rich in them, and if I do not omit them it is only because I thought it necessary in the interest of the characterization of the author to print his story *in toto*.

—A. Ch.

. . . The poor thing seemed very unhappy. . . .

"At what time does he awake?" was borne to me in a bass voice from the lobby.

"That depends!" Polycarp's voice answered. "Sometimes he wakes at five o'clock, and sometimes he sleeps like a log till morning. . . . Everybody knows he has nothing to do."

"You're his valet, I suppose?"

"His servant. Now don't bother me; hold your tongue. Don't you see I'm reading?"

I peeped into the lobby. My Polycarp was there, lolling on the large red trunk, and, as usual, reading a book. With his sleepy, unblinking eyes fixed attentively on his book, he was moving his lips and frowning. He was evidently irritated by the presence of the stranger, a tall, bearded muzhik, who was standing near the trunk persistently trying to inveigle him into conversation. At my appearance the muzhik took a step away from the trunk and drew himself up at attention. Polycarp looked dissatisfied, and without removing his eyes from the book he rose slightly.

"What do you want?" I asked the muzhik.

"I have come from the Count, your honour. The Count sends you his greetings, and begs you to come to him at once. . . ."

"Has the Count arrived?" I asked, much astonished.

"Just so, your honour. . . . He arrived last night. . . . Here's a letter, sir. . . ."

"What the devil has brought him back!" my Polycarp grumbled. "Two summers we've lived peacefully without him, and this year he'll again make a pigsty of the district. We'll again not escape without shame."

"Hold your tongue, your opinion is not asked!"

"I need not be asked. . . . I'll speak unasked. You'll again come home from him in drunken disorder and bathe in the lake just as you are, in all your clothes. . . . I've to clean them afterwards! They cannot be cleaned in three days!"

"What's the Count doing now?" I asked the muzhik.

"He was just sitting down to dinner when he sent me to you. . . . Before dinner he fished from the bathing house, sir. . . . What answer is there?"

I opened the letter and read the following:

"My Dear Lecoq,—If you are still alive, well, and have not forgotten your ever-drunken friend, do not delay a moment. Array yourself in your clothing and fly to me. I only arrived last night and am already dying from ennui. The impatience I feel to see you knows no bounds. I myself wanted to drive over to see you and carry you off to my den, but the heat has fettered all my limbs. I am sitting on one spot fanning myself. Well, how are you? How is your clever Ivan Dem'yanych? Are you still at war with your pedant, Polycarp? Come quickly and tell me everything.

—"Your A. K."

It was not necessary to look at the signature to recognize the drunken, sprawling, ugly handwriting of my friend, Count Alexey Karnéev. The shortness of the letter, its pretension to a certain playfulness and vivacity proved that my friend, with his limited

capacities, must have torn up much notepaper before he was able to compose this epistle.

The pronoun "which" was absent from this letter, and adverbs were carefully avoided—both being grammatical forms that were seldom achieved by the Count at a single sitting.

"What answer is there, sir?" the muzhik repeated.

At first I did not reply to this question, and every clean-minded man in my place would have hesitated too. The Count was fond of me, and quite sincerely obtruded his friendship on me. I, on my part, felt nothing like friendship for the Count; I even disliked him. It would therefore have been more honest to reject his friendship once for all than to go to him and dissimulate. Besides, to go to the Count's meant to plunge once more into the life my Polycarp had characterized as a "pigsty," which two years before during the Count's residence on his estate and until he left for Petersburg had injured my good health and had dried up my brain. That loose, unaccustomed life so full of show and drunken madness, had not had time to shatter my constitution, but it had made me notorious in the whole government. . . . I was popular. . . .

My reason told me the whole truth, a blush of shame for the not distant past suffused my face, my heart sank with fear that I would not possess sufficient manliness to refuse to go to the Count's, but I did not hesitate long. The struggle lasted not more than a minute.

"Give my compliments to the Count," I said to his messenger, "and thank him for thinking of me. . . . Tell him I am busy, and that. . . . Tell him that I . . ."

And at the very moment my tongue was about to pronounce a decisive "No," I was suddenly overpowered by a feeling of dullness. . . . The young man, full of life, strength and desires, who by the decrees of fate had been cast into this forest village, was seized by a sensation of ennui, of loneliness. . . .

I remembered the Count's gardens with the exuberant vegetation of their cool conservatories, and the semi-darkness of the narrow, neglected avenues. . . . Those avenues protected from the sun by arches of the entwined branches of old limes know me well; they also know the women who sought my love and semi-darkness. . . . I remembered the luxurious drawing-room with the sweet indolence of its velvet sofas, heavy curtains and thick carpets, soft as down, with the laziness so loved by young healthy animals. . . . There recurred to my mind my drunken audacity that knew no limits to its boundless satanic pride, and contempt of life. My large body wearied by sleep again longed for movement. . . .

"Tell him I'll come!"

The muzhik bowed and retired.

"If I'd known, I wouldn't have let that devil in!" Polycarp grumbled, quickly turning over the pages of his book in an objectless manner.

"Put that book away and go and saddle Zorka," I said. "Look sharp!"

"Look sharp! Oh, of course, certainly. . . . I'm just going to rush off. . . . It would be all right to go on business, but he'll go to break the devil's horns!"

This was said in an undertone, but

loud enough for me to hear it. Having whispered this impertinence, my servant drew himself up before me and waited for me to flare up in reply, but I pretended not to have heard his words. My silence was the best and sharpest arms I could use in my contests with Polycarp. This contemptuous manner of allowing his venomous words to pass unheeded disarmed him and cut the ground away from under his feet. As a punishment it acted better than a box on the ear or a flood of vituperation. . . . When Polycarp had gone into the yard to saddle Zorka, I peeped into the book which he had been prevented from reading. It was *The Count of Monte Cristo,* Dumas' terrible romance. . . . My civilized fool read everything, beginning with the signboards of the public houses and finishing with Auguste Comte, which was lying in my trunk together with other neglected books that I did not read; but of the whole mass of written and printed matter he only approved of terrible, strongly exciting novels with "celebrated personages," poison and subterranean passages; all the rest he dubbed "nonsense." I shall have again to recur to his reading, now I had to ride off. A quarter of an hour later the hoofs of my Zorka were raising the dust on the road from the village to the Count's estate. The sun was near setting, but the heat and the sultriness were still felt. The hot air was dry and motionless, although my road led along the banks of an enormous lake. . . . On my right I saw the great expanse of water, on the left my sight was caressed by the young vernal foliage of an oak forest; nevertheless, my cheeks suffered the dryness of Sahara. "If there could only be a storm!" I thought, dreaming of a good cool downpour.

The lake slept peacefully. It did not greet with a single sound the flight of my Zorka, and it was only the piping of a young snipe that broke the grave-like silence of the motionless giant. The sun looked at itself in it as in a huge mirror, and shed a blinding light on the whole of its breadth that extended from my road to the opposite distant banks. And it seemed to my blinded eyes that nature received light from the lake and not from the sun.

The sultriness impelled to slumber the whole of that life in which the lake and its green banks so richly abounded. The birds had hidden themselves, and fish did not splash in the water, the field crickets and the grasshoppers waited in silence for coolness to set in. All around was a waste. From time to time my Zorka bore me into a thick cloud of littoral mosquitoes, and far away on the lake, scarcely moving, I could see the three black boats belonging to old Mikhey, our fisherman, who leased the fishing rights of the whole lake.

CHAPTER II

VODKA

I DID not ride in a straight line as I had to make a circuit along the road that skirted the round lake. It was only possible to go in a straight line by boat, while those who went by the road had to make a large round and the distance was almost eight versts farther. All the way, when looking at the lake, I could see beyond it the opposite clayey banks, on which the bright strip of a blossoming cherry orchard gleamed white, while farther still I could see the roofs of the

Count's barns dotted all over with many coloured pigeons, and rising still higher the small white belfry of the Count's chapel. At the foot of the clayey banks was the bathing house with sailcloth nailed on the sides and sheets hanging to dry on its railings. I saw all this, and it appeared to me as if only a verst separated me from my friend, the Count, while in order to reach his estate I had to ride about sixteen versts.

On the way, I thought of my strange relations to the Count. It was interesting for me to give myself an account of how we stood and try to settle it, but, alas! that account was a task beyond my strength. However much I thought, I could come to no satisfactory decision, and at last I arrived at the conclusion that I was but a bad judge of myself and of man in general. The people who knew both the Count and me explained our mutual connexion. The narrow-browed, who see nothing beyond the tip of their nose, were fond of asserting that the illustrious Count found in the "poor and undistinguished" magistrate a congenial hanger-on and boon companion. To their understanding, I, the writer of these lines, fawned and cringed before the Count for the sake of the crumbs and scraps that fell from his table. In their opinion the illustrious millionaire, who was both the bugbear and the envy of the whole of the S—— district, was very clever and liberal; otherwise his gracious condescension that went as far as friendship for an indigent magistrate and the genuine liberalism that made the Count tolerate my familiarity in addressing him as "thou," would be quite incomprehensible. Cleverer people explained our intimacy by our common "spiritual interests." The Count and I were of the same age. We had finished our studies in the same university, we were both jurists, and we both knew very little: I knew a little, but the Count had forgotten and drowned in alcohol the little he had ever known. We were both proud, and by virtue of some reason which was only known to ourselves, we shunned the world like misanthropes. We were both indifferent to the opinion of the world—that is of the S—— district—we were both immoral, and would certainly both end badly. These were the "spiritual interests" that united us. This was all that the people who knew us could say about our relations.

They would, of course, have spoken differently had they known how weak, soft and yielding was the nature of my friend, the Count, and how strong and hard was mine. They would have had much to say had they known how fond this infirm man was of me, and how I disliked him! He was the first to offer his friendship and I was the first to say "thou" to him, but with what a difference in the tone! In a fit of kindly feeling he embraced me, and asked me timidly to be his friend. I, on the other hand, once seized by a feeling of contempt and aversion, said to him:

"Canst thou not cease jabbering nonsense?"

And he accepted this "thou" as an expression of friendship and submitted to it from that time, repaying me with an honest, brotherly "thou."

Yes, it would have been better and more honest had I turned my Zorka's head homewards and ridden back to Polycarp and my Ivan Dem'yanych.

Afterwards I often thought: "How much misfortune I would have avoided

bearing on my shoulders, how much good I would have brought to my neighbours, if on that night I had had the resolution to turn back, if only my Zorka had gone mad and had carried me far away from that terribly large lake! What numbers of tormenting recollections which now cause my hand to quit the pen and seize my head would not have pressed so heavily on my mind!" But I must not anticipate, all the more as farther on I shall often have to pause on misfortunes. Now for gaiety. . . .

My Zorka bore me into the gates of the Count's yard. At the very gates she stumbled, and I, losing the stirrup, almost fell to the ground.

"An ill omen, sir!" a muzhik, who was standing at one of the doors of the Count's long line of stables, called to me.

I believe that a man falling from a horse may break his neck, but I do not believe in prognostications. Having given the bridle to the muzhik, I beat the dust off my top-boots with my riding-whip and ran into the house. Nobody met me. All the doors and windows of the rooms were wide open, nevertheless the air in the house was heavy, and had a strange smell. It was a mixture of the odour of ancient, deserted apartments with the tart narcotic scent of hothouse plants that have but recently been brought from the conservatories into the rooms. . . . In the drawing-room, two tumbled cushions were lying on one of the sofas that was covered with a light blue silk material, and on a round table before the sofa I saw a glass containing a few drops of a liquid that exhaled an odour of strong Riga balsam. All this denoted that the house was inhabited, but I did not meet a living soul in any of the eleven rooms that I traversed. The same desertion that was round the lake reigned in the house. . . .

A glass door led into the garden from the so-called "mosaic" drawing-room. I opened it with noise and went down the marble stairs into the garden. I had gone but a few steps through the avenue when I met Nastasia, an old woman of ninety, who had formerly been the Count's nurse. This little wrinkled old creature, forgotten by death, had a bald head and piercing eyes. When you looked at her face you involuntarily remembered the nickname "Scops-Owl" that had been given her in the village. . . . When she saw me she trembled and almost dropped a glass of milk she was carrying in both hands.

"How do you do, Scops?" I said to her.

She gave me a sidelong glance and silently went on her way. . . . I seized her by the shoulder.

"Don't be afraid, fool. . . . Where's the Count?"

The old woman pointed to her ear.

"Are you deaf? How long have you been deaf?"

Despite her great age, the old woman heard and saw very well, but she found it useful to calumniate her senses. I shook my finger at her and let her go.

Having gone on a few steps farther, I heard voices, and soon after saw people. At the spot where the avenue widened out and formed an open space surrounded by iron benches and shaded by tall white acacias, stood a table on which a samovar shone brightly. People were seated at the table, talking. I went quietly across the grass to the open

space and, hiding behind a lilac bush, searched for the Count with my eyes.

My friend, Count Karnéev, was seated at the table on a folding cane-bottomed chair, drinking tea. He was dressed in the same many-coloured dressing-gown in which I had seen him two years before, and he wore a straw hat. His face had a troubled, concentrated expression, and it was very wrinkled, so that a man not acquainted with him might have imagined he was troubled at that moment by some serious thought or anxiety. . . . The Count had not changed at all in appearance during the two years since last we met. He had the same thin body, as frail and wizened as the body of a corn-cake. He had the same narrow, consumptive shoulders, surmounted by a small red-haired head. His small nose was as red as formerly, and his cheeks were flabby and hanging like rags, as they had been two years before. On his face there was nothing of boldness, strength or manliness. . . . All was weak, apathetic and languid. The only imposing thing about him was his long, drooping moustache. Somebody had told my friend that a long moustache was very becoming to him. He believed it, and every morning since then he had measured how much longer the growth on his pale lips had become. With this moustache he reminded you of a moustached but very young and puny kitten.

Sitting next to the Count at the table was a stout man with a large closely-cropped head and very dark eyebrows, who was unknown to me. His face was fat and shone like a ripe melon. His moustache was longer than the Count's, his forehead was low, his lips were compressed, and his eyes gazed lazily into the sky. . . . The features of his face were bloated, but nevertheless they were as hard as dried-up skin. The type was not Russian. . . . The stout man was without his coat or waistcoat, and on his shirt there were dark spots caused by perspiration. He was not drinking tea but Seltzer water.

At a respectful distance from the table a short, thick-set man with a stout red neck and sticking out ears was standing. This man was Urbenin, the Count's bailiff. In honour of the Count's arrival he was dressed in a new black suit and was now suffering torments. The perspiration was pouring in streams from his red, sunburnt face. Next to the bailiff stood the muzhik, who had come to me with the letter. It was only here I noticed that this muzhik had only one eye. Standing at attention, not allowing himself the slightest movement, he was like a statue, and waited to be questioned.

"Kusma, you deserve to be thrashed black and blue with your own whip," the bailiff said to him in his reproachful soft bass voice, pausing between each word. "Is it possible to execute the master's orders in such a careless way. You ought to have requested him to come here at once and to have found out when he could be expected."

"Yes, yes, yes. . . . ." the Count exclaimed nervously. "You ought to have found out everything! He said: 'I'll come!' But that's not enough! I want him at once! Pos-i-tively at once! You asked him to come, but he did not understand!"

"Why do you require him?" the fat man asked the Count.

"I want to see him!"

"Only that? To my mind, Alexey

that magistrate would do far better if he remained at home to-day. I have no wish for guests."

I opened my eyes. What was the meaning of that masterful, authoritative "I."

"But he's not a guest!" my friend said in an imploring tone. "He won't prevent you from resting after the journey. I beg you not to stand on ceremonies with him. . . . You'll like him at once, my dear boy, and you'll soon be friends with him!"

I came out of my hiding place behind the lilac bushes and went up to the tables. The Count saw and recognized me, and his face brightened with a pleased smile.

"Here he is! Here he is!" he exclaimed, getting red with pleasure, and he jumped up from the table. "How good of you to come!"

He ran towards me, seized me in his arms, embraced me and scratched my cheeks several times with his bristly moustache. These kisses were followed by lengthy shaking of my hand and long looks into my eyes.

"You, Sergey, have not changed at all! You're still the same! The same handsome and strong fellow! Thank you for accepting my invitation and coming at once!"

When released from the Count's embrace, I greeted the bailiff, who was an old friend of mine, and sat down at the table.

"Oh, Golubchek!" the Count continued in an excitedly anxious tone. "If you only knew how delighted I am to see your serious countenance again. You are not acquainted? Allow me to introduce you—my good friend, Kaetan Kazimirovich Pshekhotsky. And this," he continued, introducing me to the fat man, "is my good old friend, Sergey Petrovich Zinov'ev! Our magistrate."

The stout, dark-browed man rose slightly from his seat and offered me his fat, and terribly sweaty hand.

"Very pleased," he mumbled, examining me from head to foot. "Very glad!"

Having given vent to his feelings and become calm again, the Count filled a glass with cold, dark brown tea for me and moved a box of biscuits towards my hand.

"Eat. . . . When passing through Moscow I bought them at Einem's. I'm very angry with you, Serezha, so angry that I wanted to quarrel with you! . . . Not only have you not written me a line during the whole of the past two years, but you did not even think a single one of my letters worth answering! That's not friendly!"

"I do not know how to write letters," I said. "Besides, I have no time for letter writing. Can you tell me what could I have written to you about?"

"There must have been many things!"

"Indeed, there was nothing. I admit of only three sorts of letters: love, congratulatory, and business letters. The first I did not write to you because you are not a woman, and I am not in love with you; the second you don't require; and from the third category we are relieved as from our birth we have never had any business connexion together."

"That's about true," the Count said, agreeing readily and quickly with everything; "but all the same, you might have written, if only a line. . . . And what's more, as Pëtr Egorych tells me, all these two years you've not set foot

here, as though you were living a thousand versts away or disdained my property. You might have lived here, shot over my grounds. Many things might have happened here while I was away."

The Count spoke much and long. When once he began talking about anything, his tongue chattered on without ceasing and without end, quite regardless of the triviality or insignificance of his subject.

In the utterance of sounds he was as untiring as my Ivan Dem'yanych. I could hardly stand him for that facility. This time he was stopped by his butler, Il'ya, a tall, thin man in a well-worn, much-stained livery, who brought the Count a wineglass of vodka and half a tumbler of water on a silver tray. The Count swallowed the vodka, washed it down with some water, making a grimace with a shake of the head.

"So it seems you have not yet stopped tippling vodka!" I said.

"No, Serezha, I have not."

"Well, you might at least drop that drunken habit of making faces and shaking your head! It's disgusting!"

"My dear boy, I'm going to drop everything. . . . The doctors have forbidden me to drink. I drink now only because it's unhealthy to drop habits all at once. . . . It must be done gradually. . . ."

I looked at the Count's unhealthy, worn face, at the wineglass, at the butler in yellow shoes. I looked at the dark-browed Pole, who from the very first moment for some reason had appeared to me to be a scoundrel and a blackguard. I looked at the one-eyed muzhik, who stood there at attention, and a feeling of dread and of oppression came over me. . . . I suddenly wanted to leave this dirty atmosphere, having first opened the Count's eyes to all the unlimited antipathy I felt for him. . . . There was a moment when I was ready to rise and depart. . . . But I did not go away. . . . I was prevented (I'm ashamed to confess it!) by physical laziness. . . .

"Give me a glass of vodka, too!" I said to Il'ya.

Long shadows began to be cast on the avenue and on the open space where we were sitting. . . .

The distant croaking of frogs, the cawing of crows and the singing of orioles greeted the setting of the sun. A gay evening was just beginning. . . .

"Tell Urbenin to sit down," I whispered to the Count. "He's standing before you like a boy."

"Oh, I never thought of that! Pëtr Egorych," the Count addressed his bailiff, "sit down, please! Why are you standing there?"

Urbenin sat down, casting a grateful glance at me. He who was always healthy and gay appeared to me now to be ill and dull. His face seemed wrinkled and sleepy, his eyes looked at us lazily and as if unwillingly.

"Well, Pëtr Egorych, what's new here? Any pretty girls, eh?" Karnéev asked him. "Isn't there something special . . . something out of the common?"

"It's always the same, your Excellency. . . ."

"Are there no new . . . nice little girls, Pëtr Egorych?"

Moral Pëtr Egorych blushed.

"I don't know, your Excellency. . . . I don't occupy myself with that. . . ."

"There are, your Excellency," broke in the deep bass voice of one-eyed

Kuz'ma, who had been silent all the time. "And quite worth notice, too."

"Are they pretty?"

"There are all sorts, your Excellency, for all tastes. . . . There are dark ones and fair ones—all sorts. . . ."

"O, ho! . . . Stop a minute, stop a minute. . . . I remember you now. . . . My former Leporello, a sort of secretary. . . . Your name's Kuz'ma, I think?"

"Yes, your Excellency. . . ."

"I remember, I remember. . . . Well, and what have you now in view? Something new, all peasant girls?"

"Mostly peasants, of course, but there are finer ones, too. . . ."

"Where have you found finer ones . . ." Il'ya asked, winking at Kuz'ma.

"At Easter the postman's sister-in-law came to stay with him . . . Nastasia Ivanovna. . . . A girl all on springs. I myself would like to eat her, but money is wanted. . . . Cheeks like peaches, and all the rest as good. . . . There's something finer than that, too. It's only waiting for you, your Excellency. Young, plump, jolly . . . a beauty! Such a beauty, your Excellency, as you've scarcely found in Petersburg. . . .

"Who is it?"

"Olenka, the forester Skvortsov's daughter."

Urbenin's chair cracked under him. Supporting himself with his hands on the table, purple in the face, the bailiff rose slowly and turned towards one-eyed Kuz'ma. The expression on his face of dullness and fatigue had given place to one of great anger.

"Hold your tongue, serf!" he grumbled. "One-eyed vermin! Say what you please, but don't dare to touch respectable people!"

"I'm not touching you, Pëtr Egorych," Kuz'ma said imperturbably.

"I'm not talking about myself, blockhead! Besides. . . . Forgive me, your Excellency," the bailiff turned to the Count, "forgive me for making a scene: but I would beg your Excellency to forbid your Leporello, as you were pleased to call him, to extend his zeal to persons who are worthy of all respect!"

"I don't understand . . ." the Count lisped naively. "He has said nothing very offensive."

Insulted and excited to a degree, Urbenin went away from the table and stood with his side towards us. With his arms crossed on his breast and his eyes blinking, hiding his purple face from us behind the branches of the bushes, he stood plunged in thought.

Had not this man a presentiment that in the near future his moral feelings would have to suffer offences a thousand times more bitter?

"I don't understand what has offended him!" the Count whispered in my ear. "What a caution! There was nothing offensive in what was said."

After two years of sober life, the glass of vodka acted on me in a slightly intoxicating manner. A feeling of lightness, of pleasure, was diffused in my brain and through my whole body. Added to this, I began to feel the coolness of evening, which little by little was supplanting the sultriness of the day. I proposed to take a stroll. The Count and his new Polish friend had their coats brought from the house, and we set off. Urbenin followed us.

CHAPTER III

HER SINS

THE Count's gardens in which we were walking are worthy of special description owing to their striking luxuriousness. From a botanical or an economical point of view, and in many other ways, they are richer and grander than any other gardens I have ever seen. Besides the above-mentioned avenue with its green vaults, you found in them everything that capricious indulgence can demand from pleasure gardens. You found here every variety of indigenous and foreign fruit tree, beginning with the wild cherry and plum and finishing with apricots that were the size of a goose's egg. You came across mulberry trees, barberry bushes, and even olive trees at every step. . . . Here there were half-ruined, moss-grown grottoes, fountains, little ponds destined for goldfish and tame carp, hillocks, pavilions and costly conservatories. . . . And all this rare luxury which had been collected by the hands of grandfathers and fathers, all this wealth of large, full roses, poetical grottoes and endless avenues, was barbarously abandoned to neglect, and given over to the power of weeds, the thievish hatchet and the rooks who unceremoniously built their ugly nests on the branches of rare trees! The lawful possessor of all this wealth walked beside me, and the muscles of his lean, satiated face were no more moved by the sight of this neglect, this crying human slovenliness, than if he had not been the owner of these gardens. Once only, by way of making some remark, he said to his bailiff that it would not be a bad thing if the paths were sanded. He noticed the absence of the sand that was not wanted by anybody, but he did not notice the bare trees that had been frozen in the hard winters, or the cows that were walking about in the garden. In reply to his remark, Urbenin said it would require ten men to keep the garden in order, and as his Excellency was not pleased to reside on his estate, the outlay on the garden would be a useless and unproductive luxury. The Count, of course, agreed with this argument.

"Besides, I must confess I have no time for it!" Urbenin said with a wave of the hand. "All the summer in the fields, and in winter selling the corn in town. . . . There's no time for gardens here!"

The charm of the principal, the so-called "main avenue," consisted in its old broad-spreading limes, and in the masses of tulips that stretched out in two variegated borders at each side of its whole length and finished at the end in a yellow spot. This was a yellow stone pavilion, which at one time had contained a refreshment room, billiards, skittles and other games. We wandered, without any object, towards this pavilion. At its door we were met by a live creature which somewhat unsettled the nerves of my companion, who was never very courageous.

"A snake!" the Count shrieked, seizing me by the hand and turning pale. "Look!"

The Pole stepped back, and then stood stock still with his arms outstretched as if he wanted to bar the way for the apparition. On the upper step of the half-crumbled stone stair there lay a young snake of our ordinary Russian species. When it saw us it raised its

head and moved. The Count shrieked again and hid behind me.

"Don't be afraid, your Excellency. . . ." Urbenin said lazily as he placed his foot on the first step.

"But if it bites?"

"It won't bite. Besides, the danger from the bite of these snakes is much exaggerated. I was once bitten by an old snake, and as you see, I didn't die. The sting of a man is worse than a snake's!" Urbenin said with a sigh, wishing to point a moral.

Indeed, the bailiff had not had time to mount two or three steps before the snake stretched out to its full length, and with the rapidity of lightning vanished into a crevice between two stones. When we entered the pavilion we saw another living creature. Lying on the torn and faded cloth of the old billiard table there was an elderly man of middle height in a blue jacket, striped trousers, and a jockey cap. He was sleeping sweetly and quietly. Around his toothless gaping mouth and on his pointed nose flies were making themselves at home. Thin as a skeleton, with an open mouth, lying there immovable, he looked like a corpse that had only just been brought in from the mortuary to be dissected.

"Franz!" said Urbenin, poking him. "Franz!"

After being poked five or six times, Franz shut his mouth, sat up, looked round at us, and lay down again. A minute later his mouth was again open and the flies that were walking about his nose were again disturbed by the slight vibration of his snores.

"He's asleep, the lewd swine!" Urbenin sighed.

"Is he not our gardener, Tricher?" the Count asked.

"No other. . . . That's how he is every day . . . He sleeps like a dead man all day and plays cards all night. I was told he gambled last night till six in the morning."

"What do they play?"

"Games of hazard. . . . Chiefly stukolka."

"Well, such gentlemen work badly. They draw their wages for nothing!"

"It was not to complain, your Excellency," Urbenin hastened to say, "that I told you this, or to express my dissatisfaction; it was only. . . . I am only sorry that so capable a man is a slave to his passions. He really is a hard-working man, capable too. . . . He does not receive wages for nothing."

We glanced again at the gambler Franz and left the pavilion. We then turned towards the garden gate and went into the fields.

There are but few novels in which the garden gate does not play an important part. If you have not noticed this, you have only to inquire of my man Polycarp, who in his lifetime has swallowed multitudes of terrible and not terrible novels, and he will doubtless confirm this insignificant but characteristic fact.

My novel has also not escaped the inevitable garden gate. But my gate is different from others in this, that my pen will have to lead through it many unfortunate and scarcely any happy people; and even this in a direction contrary to the one found in other novels. And what is worse, I had once to describe this gate not as a novel-writer but as an examining magistrate. In my novel more criminals than lovers will pass through it.

A quarter of an hour later, supporting ourselves on our walking sticks, we wound our way up the hill to what is known as the "Stone Grave." In the surrounding villages there is a legend that under this heap of stones there reposes the body of a Tartar Khan, who, fearing that after his death the enemy would desecrate his ashes, had ordered that a mound of stones was to be made above his body. This legend, however, is scarcely correct. The layers of stone, their size and relative position, exclude the possibility of man's hand having had a part in the formation of this mound. It stands solitary in the midst of fields and has the aspect of an overturned dome.

From the top of this mound we could see the lake to the whole of its captivating extent and indescribable beauty. The sun, no longer reflected in it, had set, leaving behind a broad purple stripe that illuminated the surroundings with a pleasing rosy-yellow tint. The Count's manor and homestead with their houses, church and gardens, lay at our feet, and on the other side of the lake the little village where it was my fate to live looked grey in the distance. As before, the surface of the lake was without a ripple. Old Mikhey's little boats, separated from one another, were hurrying towards the shore.

To the left of my little village the buildings of the railway station stood out dark beneath the smoke from the engines, and behind us at the foot of the Stone Grave the road was bordered on either side by towering old poplars. This road leads to the Count's forest that extends to the very horizon.

The Count and I stood on the top of the hill. Urbenin and the Pole being heavy men preferred to wait for us on the road below.

"Who's that cove?" I asked the Count, nodding towards the Pole. "Where did you pick him up?"

"He's a very nice fellow, Serezha; very nice!" the Count said in an agitated voice. "You'll soon be the best of friends."

"Oh, that's not likely! Why does he never speak?"

"He is silent by nature! But he's very clever!"

"But what sort of a man is he?"

"I became acquainted with him in Moscow. He is very nice. You'll hear all about it afterwards, Serezha; don't ask now. Let's go down."

We descended the hill and went along the road towards the forest. It began to be perceptibly darker. The cry of the cuckoo, and the tired vocal warbles of a possibly youthful nightingale were heard in the forest.

"Hollo! Hollo! Catch me!" we heard a high-pitched voice of a child shout as we approached the forest.

A little girl of about five with hair as white as flax, dressed in a sky-blue frock, ran out of the wood. When she saw us she laughed aloud, and with a skip and a jump put her arms round Urbenin's knee. Urbenin lifted her up and kissed her cheek.

"My daughter Sasha!" he said. "Let me introduce her!"

Sasha was pursued out of the wood by a schoolboy of about fifteen, Urbenin's son. When he saw us he pulled off his cap hesitatingly, put it on, and pulled it off again. He was followed quietly by a red spot. This red spot attracted our attention at once. "What a beautiful apparition!" the Count exclaimed, catch-

ing hold of my hand. "Look! How charming! What girl is this? I did not know that my forests were inhabited by such naiads!"

I looked round at Urbenin in order to ask him who this girl was, and, strange to say, it was only at that moment I noticed that he was terribly drunk. He was as red as a crawfish, he tottered and, seizing my elbow, he whispered into my ear, exhaling the fumes of spirit on me:

"Sergey Petrovich, I implore you prevent the Count from making any further remarks about this girl! He may, from habit say too much; she is a most worthy person!"

This "most worthy person" was represented by a girl of about nineteen, with beautiful fair hair, kind blue eyes and long curls. She was dressed in a bright red frock, made in a fashion that was neither that of a child nor of a young girl. Her legs, straight as needles, in red stockings, were shod with tiny shoes that were small as a child's. All the time I was admiring her she moved about her well-rounded shoulders coquettishly, as if they were cold or as if my gaze bit her.

"Such a young face, and such developed contours!" whispered the Count, who from his earliest youth had lost the capacity of respecting women, and never looked at them otherwise than from the point of view of a spoilt animal.

I remember that a good feeling was ignited in my breast. I was still a poet, and in the company of the woods, of a May night, and the first twinkling of the evening stars, I could only look at a woman as a poet does. . . . I looked at "the girl in red" with the same veneration I was accustomed to look upon the forests, the hills and the blue sky. I still had a certain amount of the sentimentality I had inherited from my German mother.

"Who is she?" the Count asked.

"She is the daughter of our forester Skvortsov, your Excellency!" Urbenin replied.

"Is she the Olenka, the one-eyed muzhik spoke of?"

"Yes, he mentioned her name," the bailiff answered, looking at me with large, imploring eyes.

The girl in red let us go past her, turning away without taking any notice of us. Her eyes were looking at something at the side, but I, a man who knows women, felt her pupils resting on my face.

"Which of them is the Count?" I heard her whisper behind us.

"That one with the long moustache," the schoolboy answered.

And we heard silvery laughter behind us. It was the laughter of disenchantment. She had thought that the Count, the owner of these immense forests and the broad lake, was I, and not that pigmy with the worn face and long moustache.

I heard a deep sigh issue from Urbenin's powerful breast. That iron man could scarcely move.

"Dismiss the bailiff," I whispered to the Count. "He is ill or—drunk."

"Pëtr Egorych, you seem to be unwell," the Count said, turning to Urbenin. "I do not require you just now, so I will not detain you any longer."

"Your Excellency need not trouble about me. Thank you for your attention, but I am not ill."

I looked back. The red spot had not moved, but was looking after us.

Poor, fair little head! Did I think on that quiet, peaceful May evening that she would afterwards become the heroine of my troubled romance?

Now, while I write these lines, the autumn rain beats fiercely against my warm windows, and the wind howls above me. I gaze at the dark window and on the dark background of night beyond, trying by the strength of my imagination to conjure up again the charming image of my heroine. . . . . I see her with her innocent, childish, naive, kind little face and loving eyes, and I wish to throw down my pen and tear up and burn all that I have already written.

But here, next to my inkstand, is her photograph. Here, the fair little head is represented in all the vain majesty of a beautiful but deeply-fallen woman. Her weary eyes, proud of their depravity, are motionless. Here she is just the serpent, the harm of whose bite Urbenin would scarcely have called exaggerated.

She gave a kiss to the storm, and the storm broke the flower at the very roots. Much was taken, but too dearly was it paid for. The reader will forgive her her sins!

CHAPTER IV

THE WOODS

We walked through the woods.

The pines were dull in their silent monotony. They all grow in the same way, one like the others, and at every season of the year they retain the same appearance, knowing neither death nor the renewal of spring. Still, they are attractive in their moroseness: immovable, soundless they seem to think mournful thoughts.

"Hadn't we better turn back?" the Count suggested.

This question received no reply. It was all the same to the Pole where he was. Urbenin did not consider his voice decisive, and I was too much delighted with the coolness of the forest and its resinous air to wish to turn back. Besides, it was necessary to kill time till night, even by a simple walk. The thoughts of the approaching wild night were accompanied by a sweet sinking of the heart. I am afraid to confess that I thought of it, and had already mentally a foretaste of its enjoyments. Judging by the impatience with which the Count constantly looked at his watch, it was evident that he, too, was tormented by expectations. We felt that we understood each other.

Near the forester's house, which nestled between pines on a small square open space, we were met by the loud-sounding bark of two small fiery-yellow dogs, of a breed that was unknown to me; they were as glossy and supple as eels. Recognizing Urbenin, they joyfully wagged their tails and ran towards him, from which one could deduce that the bailiff often visted the forester's house. Here, too, near the house, we were met by a lad without boots or cap, with large freckles on his astonished face. For a moment he looked at us in silence with staring eyes, then, evidently recognizing the Count, he gave an exclamation and rushed headlong into the house.

"I know what he's gone for," the Count said, laughing. "I remember him. . . . It's Mit'ka."

The Count was not mistaken. In less

than a minute Mit'ka came out of the house carrying a tray with a glass of vodka and a tumbler half full of water.

"For your good health, your Excellency!" he said, a broad grin suffusing the whole of his stupid, astonished face.

The Count drank off the vodka, washed it down with water in lieu of a snack, but this time he made no wry face. A hundred paces from the house there was an iron seat, as old as the pines above it. We sat down on it and contemplated the May evening in all its tranquil beauty. . . . The frightened crows flew cawing above our heads, the song of nightingales was borne towards us from all sides; these were the only sounds that broke the pervading stillness.

The Count does not know how to be silent, even on such a calm spring evening, when the voice of man is the least agreeable sound.

"I don't know if you will be satisfied?" he said to me. "I have ordered a fish-soup and game for supper. With the vodka we shall have cold sturgeon and sucking-pig with horse-radish."

As if angered at this prosaic observation, the poetical pines suddenly shook their tops and a gentle rustle passed through the wood. A fresh breeze swept over the glade and played with the grass.

"Down, down!" Urbenin cried to the flame-coloured dogs, who were preventing him from lighting his cigarette with their caresses. "I think we shall have rain before night. I feel it in the air. It was so terribly hot today that it does prophesy rain. It will be a good thing for the corn."

"What's the use of corn to you," I thought, "if the Count will spend it all on drink? The rain need not trouble about it."

Once more a light breeze passed over the forest, but this time it was stronger. The pines and the grass rustled louder.

"Let us go home."

We rose and strolled lazily back towards the little house.

"It is better to be this fair-haired Olenka," I said, addressing myself to Urbenin, "and to live here with the beasts than to be a magistrate and live among men. . . . It's more peaceful. Is it not so, Pëtr Egorych?"

"It's all the same what one is, Sergey Petrovich, if only the soul is at peace."

"Is pretty Olenka's soul at peace?"

"God alone knows the secrets of other people's souls, but I think she has nothing to trouble her. She has not much to worry her, and no more sins than an infant. . . . She's a very good girl! Ah, now the sky is at last beginning to talk of rain. . . ."

A rumble was heard, somewhat like the sound of a distant vehicle or the rattle of a game of skittles. Somewhere, far beyond the forest, there was a peal of thunder. Mit'ka, who had been watching us the whole time, shuddered and crossed himself.

"A thunderstorm!" the Count exclaimed with a start. "What a surprise! The rain will overtake us on our way home. . . . How dark it is! I said we ought to have turned back! And you wouldn't, and went on and on."

"We might wait in the cottage till the storm is over," I suggested.

"Why in the cottage?" Urbenin said hastily, and his eyes blinked in a strange manner. "It will rain all night, so you'll have to remain all night in the cottage! Please, don't trouble. . . . Go quietly

on, and Mit'ka shall run on and order your carriage to come to meet you."

"Never mind, perhaps it won't rain all night. . . . Storm clouds usually pass by quickly. . . . Besides, I don't know the new forester as yet, and I'd also like to have a chat with this Olenka . . . and find out what sort of a dickey bird she is. . . ."

"I've no objections!" the Count agreed.

"How can you go there, if—if the place is not—not in order?" Urbenin mumbled anxiously. "Why should your Excellency sit there in a stuffy room when you could be at home? I don't understand what pleasure that can be! . . . How can you get to know the forester if he is ill? . . ."

It was very evident that the bailiff strongly objected to our going into the forester's house. He even spread his arms as if he wanted to bar the way. . . . I understood by his face that he had reasons for preventing us from going in. I respect other people's reasons and secrets, but on this occasion my curiosity was greatly excited. I persisted, and we entered the house.

"Walk into the drawing-room, please," bare-footed Mit'ka spluttered almost choking with delight.

Try to imagine the very smallest drawing-room in the world, with unpainted deal walls. These walls are hung all over with oleographs from the "Niva," photographs in frames made of shells, and testimonials. One testimonial is from a certain baron, expressing his gratitude for many years of service; all the others are for horses. Here and there ivy climbs up the wall. . . . In a corner a small lamp, whose tiny blue flame is faintly reflected on the silver mounting, burns peacefully before a little icon. Chairs that have evidently been only recently bought are pressed close together round the walls. Too many had been purchased, and they had been squeezed together, as there was nowhere else to put them. . . . Here, also, there are armchairs and a sofa in snow-white covers with flounces and laces, crowded up with a polished round table. A tame hare dozes on the sofa. . . . The room is cosy, clean and warm. . . . The presence of a woman can be noticed everywhere. Even the whatnot with books has a look of innocence and womanliness; it appears to be anxious to say that there is nothing on its shelves but wishy-washy novels and mawkish verse. . . . The charm of such warm, cosy rooms is not so much felt in spring as in autumn, when you look for a refuge from the cold and dampness.

After much loud snivelling, blowing, and noisy striking of matches, Mit'ka lit two candles and placed them on the table as carefully as if they had been milk. We sat down in the arm-chairs, looked at each other, and laughed.

"Nikolai Efimych is ill in bed," Urbenin said, to explain the absence of the master, "and Olga Nikolaevna has probably gone to accompany my children. . . ."

"Mit'ka, are the doors shut?" we heard a weak tenor voice asking from the next room.

"They're all shut, Nikolai Efimych!" Mit'ka shouted hoarsely, and he rushed headlong into the next room.

"That's right! See that they are all shut," the same weak voice said again. "And locked—firmly locked. . . . If thieves break in, you must tell me. . . .

I'll shoot the villains with my gun . . . the scoundrels!"

"Certainly, Nikolai Efimych!"

We laughed and looked inquiringly at Urbenin. He grew very red, and in order to hide his confusion he began to arrange the curtains of the windows. . . . What does this dream mean? We again looked at each other.

We had no time for perplexity. Hasty steps were heard outside, then a noise in the porch and the slamming of doors. And the "girl in red" rushed into the room.

"I love the thunder in early May," she sang in a loud, shrill soprano voice, and she cut short her song with a burst of laughter, but when she saw us she suddenly stood still and was silent,—she became embarrassed, and went as quietly as a lamb into the room in which the voice of Nikolai Efimych, her father, had been heard.

"She did not expect to see you," Urbenin said, laughing.

A few minutes later she again came quietly into the room, sat down on the chair nearest the door and began to examine us. She stared at us boldly, not as if we were new people for her, but as if we were animals in the Zoological Gardens. For a minute we too looked at her in silence without moving. . . . I would have agreed to sit still and look at her for a whole hour in this way—she was so lovely that evening. As fresh as the air, rosy, breathing rapidly, her bosom rising and falling, her curls scattered wildly on her forehead, on her shoulders, and on her right hand that was raised to arrange her collar; with large, sparkling eyes. . . . And all this was found on one little body that a single glance could envelop. If you glanced for a moment at this small object you saw more than you would if you looked for a whole century at the endless horizon. . . . She looked at me seriously, from my feet upwards, inquiringly; when her eyes left me and passed to the Court or to the Pole I began to read in them the contrary: a glance that passed from the head to the feet, and laughter. . . .

I was the first to speak.

"Allow me to introduce myself," I said, rising and going up to her. "Zinov'ev. . . . And let me introduce my friend, Count Karnéev. . . . We beg you to pardon us for breaking into your nice little house without an invitation. . . . We would, of course, never have done so if the storm had not driven us in. . . ."

"But that won't cause our little house to tumble down!" she said, laughing and giving me her hand.

She displayed her splendid white teeth. I sat down on a chair next to her, and told her how quite unexpectedly the storm had overtaken us on our walk. Our conversation began with the weather—the beginning of all beginnings. While we were talking, Mit'ka had had time to offer the Count two glasses of vodka with the inseparable tumbler of water. Thinking that I was not looking at him, the Count made a sweet grimace and shook his head after each glass.

"Perhaps you would like some refreshments?" Olenka asked me, and, not waiting for an answer, she left the room.

The first drops of rain rattled against the panes. . . . I went up to the windows. . . . It was now quite dark, and through the glass I could see nothing but the raindrops creeping down

and the reflection of my own nose. There was a flash of lightning, which illuminated some of the nearest pines.

"Are the doors shut?" I heard the same tenor voice ask again. "Mit'ka, come here, you vile-spirited scoundrel! Shut the doors! Oh, Lord, what torments!"

A peasant woman with an enormous, tightly tied-in stomach and a stupid, troubled face came into the room, and, having bowed low to the Count, she spread a white table-cloth on the table. Mit'ka followed her carefully carrying a tray with various *hors d'œuvres*. A minute later, we had vodka, rum, cheese, and a dish of some sort of roasted bird on the table before us. The Count drank a glass of vodka, but he would not eat anything. The Pole smelt the bird mistrustfully, and then began to carve it.

"The rain has begun! Look!" I said to Olenka, who had re-entered the room.

"The girl in red" came up to the window where I was standing, and at that very moment we were illuminated by a white flash of light. . . . There was a fearful crash above us, and it appeared to me that something large and heavy had been torn from the sky and had fallen to earth with a terrible racket. . . . The window panes and the wine-glasses that were standing before the Count jingled and emitted their tinkling sound. . . . The thunderclap was a loud one.

"Are you afraid of thunder-storms?" I asked Olenka.

She only pressed her cheek to her round shoulders and looked at me with childish confidence.

"I'm afraid," she whispered after a moment's reflection. "My mother was killed by a storm. . . . The newspaper even wrote about it. . . . My mother was going through the fields, crying. . . . She had a very bitter life in this world. God had compassion on her and killed her with His heavenly electricity."

"How do you know that there is electricity there?"

"I have learned. . . . Do you know? People who have been killed by a storm or in war, or who have died after a difficult confinement go to paradise. . . . This is not written anywhere in books, but it is true. My mother is now in paradise! I think the thunder will also kill me some day, and I shall go to paradise too. . . . Are you a cultivated man?"

"Yes."

"Then you will not laugh. . . . This is how I should like to die: to dress in the most costly fashionable frock, like the one I saw the other day on our rich lady, the land-owner Sheffer; to put bracelets on my arms. . . . Then to go to the very summit of the 'Stone Grave' and allow myself to be killed by the lightning, so that all the people could see it. . . . A terrible peal of thunder, and then, you know, the end!"

"What an odd fancy!" I said, laughing and looking into her eyes that were full of holy horror at this terrible but effective death. "Then you don't want to die in an ordinary dress?"

"No! . . . Olenka shook her head "And so that everybody should see me."

"The frock you are in is far better than any fashionable and expensive dress. . . . It suits you. In it you look like the red flower of the green woods."

"No, that is not true!" And Olenka sighed ingenuously. "This frock is a cheap one; it can't be pretty."

The Count came up to our window with the evident intention of talking to pretty Olenka. My friend could speak three European languages, but he did not know how to talk to women. He stood near us awkwardly, smiling in an inane manner; then he lowed,—inarticulately, "Er—yes,"—and retraced his steps to the decanter of vodka.

"You were singing 'I love the thunder in early May,'" I said to Olenka. "Have those verses been set to music?"

"No, I sing all the verses I know to my own melodies."

I happened by chance to glance back. Urbenin was looking at us. In his eyes I read hatred and animosity: passions that were not at all in keeping with his kind, meek face.

"Can he be jealous?" I thought.

The poor fellow caught my inquiring glance, rose from his chair and went into the lobby to look for something. . . . Even by his gait one could see that he was agitated. The peals of thunder became louder and louder, more prolonged, and oftener repeated. . . . The lightning unceasingly illuminated the sky, the pines and the wet earth with its pleasant but blinding light. . . . The rain was not likely to end soon. I left the window and went up to the bookshelves and began to examine Olenka's library. "Tell me what you read, and I will tell you what you are," I said. But out of the goods that were so symmetrically ranged on the shelves it was difficult to arrive at any estimate of Olenka's mental capacities or "educational standard." There was a strange medley on those shelves. Three anthologies, one book of Börne's, Evtushevsky's arithmetic, the second volume of Lermontov's works, Shklyarevsky, a number of the magazine *Work*, a cookery book, *Skladchina* . . . I might enumerate other books for you but at the moment I took *Skladchina* from the shelf and began to turn over the pages. The door leading into the next room opened, and a person entered the drawing-room, who at once diverted my attention from Olenka's standard of culture. This person was a tall, muscular man in a print dressing-gown and torn slippers, with an original countenance. His face, covered all over with blue veins, was ornamented with a pair of sergeant's moustaches and whiskers, and had in general a strong resemblance to a bird. His whole face seemed to be drawn forwards, as if trying to concentrate itself in the tip of the nose. Such faces are like the spout of a pitcher. This person's small head was set on a long thin throat, with a large Adam's-apple, and shook about like the nesting-box of a starling in the wind. . . . This strange man looked round on us all with his dim green eyes, and then let them rest on the Count.

"Are the doors shut?" he asked in an imploring voice.

The Count looked at me and shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't trouble, papasha!" Olenka answered. "They are all shut. . . . Go back to your room!"

"Is the barn door shut?"

"He's a little queer. . . . It takes him sometimes," Urbenin whispered to me as he came in from the lobby. "He's afraid of thieves, and always troubling about the doors, as you see."

"Nikolai Efimych," he continued, addressing this strange apparition, "go back to your room and go to bed! Don't trouble, everything is shut up!"

"And are the windows shut?"

Nikolai Efimych hastily looked to see if the windows were properly bolted, and then without taking any notice of us he shuffled off into his own room.

"The poor fellow has these attacks sometimes," Urbenin began to explain as soon as he had left the room. "He's a good, capable man; he has a family, too—such a misfortune! Almost every summer he is a little out of his mind. . . ."

I looked at Olenka. She became confused and hiding her face from us began to put in order again her books that I had disarranged. She was evidently ashamed of her mad father.

"The carriage is there your Excellency! Now you can drive home, if you wish!"

"Where has that carriage come from?" I asked.

"I sent for it. . . ."

A minute later I was sitting with the Count in the carriage, listening to the peals of thunder and feeling very angry.

"We've been nicely turned out of the little house by that Pëtr Egorych, the devil take him!" I grumbled, getting really angry. "So he's prevented us from examining Olenka properly! I would not have eaten her! . . . The old fool! The whole time he was bursting with jealousy. . . . He's in love with that girl. . . ."

"Yes, yes, yes. . . . Would you believe it. I noticed that, too! He would not let us go into the house from jealousy. And he sent for the carriage only from jealousy. . . . Ha, ha, ha!"

"The later love comes the more it burns. . . . Besides, brother, it's difficult not to fall in love with this girl indeed, if one sees her every day as we saw her to-day! She's devilish pretty! But she's not for his net. . . . He ought to understand it and not be jealous of others so egoistically. . . . Why can't he love and not stand in the way of others, all the more as he must know she's not destined for him? . . . What an old blockhead!"

"Do you remember how enraged he was when Kuz'ma mentioned her name at tea-time?" the Count sniggered. "I thought he was going to thrash us all. . . . A man does not defend the good fame of a woman so hotly if he's indifferent to her. . . ."

"Some men will, brother. . . . But this is not the question. . . . What's important is this. . . . If he can command us in the way he has done to-day, what does he do with the small people, with those who are at his disposal? Doubtless, the stewards, the butlers, the huntsmen and the rest of the small fry are prevented by him from even approaching her! Love and jealousy make a man unjust, heartless, misanthropical. . . . I don't mind betting that for the sake of this Olenka he has worried more than one of the people under his control. It will, therefore, be wise on your part if you put less trust in his complaints of the people in your service and his demands for the dismissal of this or that one. In general, to limit his power for a time. . . . Love will pass—well, and then there will be nothing to fear. He's a kind and honest fellow. . . ."

"And what do you think of her papa?" the Count asked, laughing.

"A madman. . . . He ought to be in a madhouse and not looking after forests. In general you won't be far from the truth if you put up a signboard:

'Madhouse' over the gate of your estate. . . . You have a real Bedlam here! This forester, the Scops-Owl, Franz, who is mad on cards, this old man in love, an excitable girl, a drunken Count. . . . What do you want more?"

"Why, this forester receives a salary! How can he do his work if he is mad?"

"Urbenin evidently only keeps him for his daughter's sake. . . . Urbenin says that Nikolai Efimych has these attacks every summer. . . . That's not likely. . . . This forester is ill, not every summer, but always. . . . By good luck, your Pëtr Egorych seldom lies, and he gives himself away when he does lie about anything. . . ."

"Last year Urbenin informed me that our old forester Akhmet'ev was going to become a monk on Mount Athos, and he recommended me to take the 'experienced, honest and worthy Skvortsov' . . . I, of course, agreed as I always do. Letters are not faces: they do not give themselves away when they lie.

The carriage drove into the courtyard and stopped at the front door. We alighted. The rain had stopped. The thunder cloud, scintillating with lightning and emitting angry grumbles, was hurrying towards the north-east and uncovering more and more the dark blue star-spangled sky. It was like a heavily armed power which having ravaged the country and imposed a terrible tribute, was rushing on to new conquests. . . . The small clouds that remained behind were chasing after it as if fearing to be unable to catch it up. . . . Nature had its peace restored to it.

And that peace seemed astonished at the calm, aromatic air, so full of softness, of the melodies of nightingales, at the silence of the sleeping gardens and the caressing light of the rising moon. The lake awoke after the day's sleep, and by gentle murmurs brought memories of itself to man's hearing. . . .

At such a time it is good to drive through the fields in a comfortable calash or to be rowing on the lake. . . . But we went into the house. . . . There another sort of poetry was awaiting us.

CHAPTER V

TELEGRAM

A MAN who under the influence of mental pain or unbearably oppressive suffering sends a bullet through his own head is called a suicide; but for those who give freedom to their pitiful, soul-debasing passions in the holy days of spring and youth there is no name in man's vocabulary. After the bullet follows the peace of the grave: ruined youth is followed by years of grief and painful recollections. He who has profaned his spring will understand the present condition of my soul. I am not yet old, or grey, but I no longer live. Psychiaters tell us that a soldier, who was wounded at Waterloo, went mad, and afterwards assured everybody—and believed it himself—that he had died at Waterloo, and that what was now considered to be him was only his shadow, a reflection of the past. I am now experiencing something resembling this semi-death. . . .

"I am very glad that you ate nothing at the forester's and haven't spoilt your appetite," the Count said to me as we entered the house. "We shall have an excellent supper. . . . Like old times. . . . Serve supper!" He gave the order to Il'ya who was helping him to take off his coat and put on a dressing gown.

We went into the dining-room. Here on the side-table life was already bubbling over. Bottles of every colour and of every imaginable size were standing in rows as on the shelves of a theatre refreshment-room, reflecting on their sides the light of the lamps while awaiting our attention. All sorts of salted and pickled viands and various *hors d'œuvres* stood on another table with a decanter of vodka and another of English bitters. Near the wine bottles there were two dishes, one of sucking pig and the other of cold sturgeon.

"Well, gentlemen," the Count began as he poured out three glasses of vodka and shivered as if from cold. "To our good health! Kaetan Kazimirovich, take your glass!"

I drank mine off, the Pole only shook his head negatively. He moved the dish of sturgeon towards himself, smelt it, and began to eat.

I must apologize to the reader. I have now to describe something not at all "romantic."

"Well, come on . . . they drank another," the Count said, and filled the glasses again. "Fire away, Lecoq!"

I took up my wineglass, looked at it and put it down again.

"The devil take it, it's long since I drank," I said. "Shouldn't we remember old times?"

Without further reflection, I filled five glasses and emptied them one after another into my mouth. That was the only way I knew how to drink. Small schoolboys learn how to smoke cigarettes from big ones: the Count looked at me, poured out five glasses for himself, and, bending forwards in the form of an arch, frowning and shaking his head, he drank them off. My five glasses appeared to him to be bravado, but I drank them not at all to display my talent for drinking. . . . I wanted to get drunk, to get properly, thoroughly drunk. . . . Drunk as I had not been for a long time while living in my village. Having drunk them, I sat down to table and began to discuss the sucking pig.

Intoxication was not long in succeeding. I soon felt a slight giddiness. There was a pleasant feeling of coolness in my chest—and a happy, expansive condition set in. Without any visible transition I suddenly became very gay. The feeling of emptiness and dullness gave place to a sensation of thorough joy and gaiety. I smiled. I suddenly wanted chatter, laughter, people around me. As I chewed the sucking pig I began to feel the fullness of life, almost the self-sufficiency of life, almost happiness.

"Why don't you drink anything?" I asked the Pole.

"He never drinks," the Count said. "Don't force him to."

"But surely you can drink something!"

The Pole put a large bit of sturgeon into his mouth and shook his head negatively. His silence incensed me.

"I say, Kaeton . . . what's your patronymic? . . . why are you always silent?" I asked him. "I have not had the pleasure of hearing your voice as yet."

His two eyebrows that resembled the outstretched wings of a swallow were raised and he gazed at me.

"Do you wish me to speak?" he asked with a strong Polish accent.

"Very much."

"Why do you wish it?"

"Why, indeed! On board steamers at dinner strangers and people who are not acquainted converse together, and here are we, who have known one another for several hours, looking at each other and not exchanging a single word! What does that look like?"

The Pole remained silent.

"Why are you silent?" I asked again after waiting a moment. "Answer something, can't you?"

"I do not wish to answer you. I hear laughter in your voice, and I do not like derision."

"He's not laughing at all," the Count interposed in alarm. "Where did you fish up that notion, Kaetan? He's quite friendly. . . ."

"Counts and Princes have never spoken to me in such a tone!" Kaetan said, frowning. "I don't like that tone."

"Consequently, you will not honour me with your conversation?" I continued to worry him as I emptied another glass and laughed.

"Do you know my real reason for coming here?" the Count broke in, desirous of changing the conversation. "I haven't told you as yet? In Petersburg I went to the doctor who has always treated me, to consult him about my health. He auscultated, knocked and pressed me everywhere, and said: 'You're not a coward!' Well, you know, though I'm no coward, I grew pale. 'I'm not a coward,' I replied."

"Cut it short, brother. . . . That's tiresome."

"He told me I should soon die if I did not go away from Petersburg! My liver is quite diseased from too much drink. . . . So I decided to come here. It would have been silly to remain there. This estate is so fine—so rich. . . . The climate alone is worth a fortune! . . . Here, at least, I can occupy myself with my own affairs. Work is the best, the most efficacious medicine. Kaetan, is that not true? I shall look after the estate and chuck drink. . . . The doctor did not allow me a single glass . . . not one!"

"Well, then, don't drink."

"I don't drink. . . . To-day is the last time, in honour of meeting you again"—the Count stretched towards me and gave me a smacking kiss on the cheek—"my dear, good friend. To-morrow—not a drop! To-day, Bacchus takes leave of me for ever. . . . Serezha, let us have a farewell glass of cognac together?"

We drank a glass of cognac.

"I shall get well, Serezha, golabchik, and I shall look after the estate. . . . Rational agriculture! Urbenin—is good, kind . . . he understands everything, but is he the master? He's a routinist! We must send for magazines, read, look into everything, take part in the agricultural and dairy exhibitions, but he is not educated for that! Is it possible he can be in love with Olenka? Ha-ha! I shall look into everything and keep him as my assistant. . . . I shall take part in the elections; I shall entertain society. . . . Eh? Even here one can live happily! What do you think? Now there you are, laughing again! Already laughing! One really can't talk with you about anything!"

I was gay, I was amused. The Count amused me; the candles, the bottles amused me; the stucco hares and ducks that ornamented the walls of the dining-room amused me. . . . The only thing that did not amuse me was the sober

face of Kaetan Kazimirovich. The presence of this man irritated me.

"Can't you send that Polish nobleman to the devil?" I whispered to the Count.

"What? For God's sake! . . ." the Count murmured, seizing both my hands as if I had been about to beat his Pole. "Let him sit there!"

"I can't look at him! I say," I continued, addressing Pshekhotsky, "you refused to talk to me; but forgive me. I have not yet given up hope of being more closely acquainted with your conversational capacities."

"Leave him alone!" the Count said, pulling me by the sleeve. "I implore you!"

"I shall not stop worrying you until you answer me," I continued. "Why are you frowning? Is it possible that you still hear laughter in my voice?"

"If I had drunk as much as you have, I would talk to you; but as it is we are not a proper pair," the Pole replied.

"That we are not a pair is what was to be proved. . . . That is exactly what I wanted to say. A goose and a swine are no comrades; the drunkard and the sober man are no kin; the drunkard disturbs the sober man, the sober man the drunkard. In the adjoining drawing-room there is a soft and excellent sofa. It's a good thing to lie upon it after sturgeon with horseradish. My voice will not be heard there. Do you not wish to retire to that room?"

The Count clasped his hands and walked about the dining-room with blinking eyes.

He is a coward and is always afraid of "big" talk. I, on the contrary, when drunk, am amused by cross-purposes and discontentedness.

"I don't understand! I don't understand!" the Count groaned, not knowing what to say or what to do.

He knew it was difficult to stop me.

"I am only slightly acquainted with you," I continued. "Perhaps you are an excellent man, and therefore I don't wish to quarrel with you too soon. . . . I won't quarrel with you. I only invite you to understand that there is no place for a sober man among drunken ones. . . . The presence of a sober man has an irritating effect on the drunken organism! . . . Take that to heart!"

"Say whatever you like!" Pshekhotsky sighed. "Nothing that you can say will provoke me, young man."

"So nothing will provoke you? Will you also not be offended if I call you an obstinate swine?"

The Pole grew red in the face—but only that. The Count became pale, he came up to me, looked imploringly at me, and spread his arms.

"Well, I beg you! Restrain your tongue!"

I had now quite entered into my drunken part, and wanted to go on, but fortunately at that moment the Count and the Pole heard footsteps and Urbenin entered the dining-room.

"I wish you all a good appetite!" he began. "I have come, your Excellency, to find out if you have any orders for me?"

"I have no orders so far, but a request," the Count replied. "I am very glad you have come, Pëtr Egorych. . . . Sit down and have supper with us, and let us talk about the business of the estate. . . ."

Urbenin sat down. The Count drank off a glass of cognac and began to explain his plans for the future rational management of the estate. He spoke very long and wearisomely, often repeating himself and changing the subject. Urbenin listened to him lazily and attentively as serious people listen to the prattle of children and women. He ate his fish-soup, and looked sadly at his plate.

"I have brought some remarkable plans with me!" the Count said among other things. "Remarkable plans! I will show them to you if you wish it?"

Karnéev jumped up and ran into his study for the plans. Urbenin took advantage of his absence to pour out half a tumbler of vodka, gulped it down, and did not even take anything to eat after it.

"Disgusting stuff this vodka is!" he said, looking with abhorrence at the decanter.

"Why didn't you drink while the Count was here, Pëtr Egorych?" I asked him. "Is it possible that you were afraid to?"

"It is better to dissimulate, Sergei Petrovich, and drink in secret than to drink before the Count. You know what a strange character the Count has. . . . If I stole twenty thousand from him and he knew it, he would say nothing owing to his carelessness; but if I forgot to give him an account of ten kopecks that I had spent or drank vodka in his presence, he would begin to lament that his bailiff was a robber. You know him well."

Urbenin half-filled the tumbler again and swigged it off.

"I think you did not drink formerly, Pëtr Egorych," I said.

"Yes, but now I drink . . . I drink terribly!" he whispered. "Terribly, day and night, not giving myself a moment's respite! Even the Count never drank to such an extent as I do now. . . . It is dreadfully hard, Sergei Petrovich! God alone knows what a weight I have on my heart! It's just grief that makes me drink. . . . I always liked and honoured you, Sergei Petrovich, and I can tell you quite candidly. . . . I'd often be glad to hang myself!"

"For what reason?"

"My own stupidity. . . . Not only children are stupid. . . . There are also fools at fifty. Don't ask the cause."

The Count re-entered the room and put a stop to his effusions.

"A most excellent liqueur," he said, placing a pot-bellied bottle with the seal of the Benedictine monks on the table instead of "the remarkable plans." "When I passed through Moscow I got it at Depré's. Have a glass, Sergei?"

"I thought you had gone to fetch the plans," I said.

"I? What plans? Oh, yes! But, brother, the devil himself couldn't find anything in my portmanteaux. . . . I rummaged and rummaged and gave it up as a bad job. . . . The liqueur is very nice. Won't you have some, Serezha?"

Urbenin remained a little longer, then he took leave and went away. When he left we began to drink claret. This wine quite finished me. I became intoxicated in the way I had wished while riding to the Count's. I became very bold, active and unusually gay. I wanted to do some extraordinary deed, something ludicrous, something that would astonish people. In such moments I thought

I could swim across the lake, unravel the most entangled case, conquer any woman. . . . The world and its life made me enthusiastic; I loved it, but at the same time I wanted to pick a quarrel with somebody, to consume him with venomous jests and ridicule. . . . It was necessary to scoff at the comical black-browed Pole and the Count, to attack them with biting sarcasm, to turn them to dust.

"Why are you silent?" I began again. "Speak! I am listening to you! Ha-ha! I am awfully fond of hearing people with serious, sedate faces talk childish drivel! . . . It is such mockery, such mockery of the brains of man! . . . The face does not correspond to the brains! In order not to lie, you ought to have the faces of idiots, and you have the countenances of Greek sages!"

I had not finished. . . . My tongue was entangled by the thought that I was talking to people who were nullities, who were unworthy of even half a word! I required a hall filled with people, brilliant women, thousands of lights. . . . I rose, took my glass and began walking about the rooms. When we indulge in debauchery, we do not limits ourselves to space. We do not restrict ourselves only to the dining-room, but take the whole house and sometimes even the whole estate.

I chose a Turkish divan in the "Mosaic hall," lay down on it and gave myself up to the power of my fantasy and to castles in the air. Drunken thoughts, one more grandiose, more limitless than the other, took possession of my young brain. A new world arose before me, full of stupefying delights and indescribable beauty.

It only remained for me to talk in rhyme and to see visions.

The Count came to me and sat down on a corner of the divan. . . . He wanted to say something to me. I had begun to read in his eyes the desire to communicate something special to me shortly after the five glasses of vodka described above. I knew of what he wanted to speak.

"What a lot I have drunk today!" he said to me. "This is more harmful to me than any sort of poison. . . . But to-day it is for the last time. . . . Upon my honour, the very last time. . . . I have strength of will. . . ."

"All right, all right. . . ."

"For the last . . . Serezha, my dear friend, for the last time. . . . Shouldn't we send a telegram to town for the last time?"

"Why not? Send it. . . ."

"Let's have one last spree in the proper way. . . . Well, get up and write it."

The Count himself did not know how to write telegrams. They always came out too long and insufficient with him. I rose and wrote:

"S—— Restaurant London. Karpov, manager of the chorus. Leave everything and come instantly by the two o'clock train.—The Count."

"It is now a quarter to eleven," the Count said. "The man will take three-quarters of an hour to ride to the station, maximum an hour. . . . Karpov will receive the telegram before one. . . . Consequently they'll have time to catch the train. . . . If they don't catch it, they can come by the goods train. Yes!"

CHAPTER VI

NIGHTS MAD

THE telegram was dispatched with one-eyed Kuz'ma. Il'ya was ordered to send carriages to the station in about an hour. In order to kill time, I began leisurely to light the lamps and candles in all the rooms, then I opened the piano and passed my fingers over the keys.

After that, I remember, I lay down on the same divan and thought of nothing, only waving away with my hand the Count, who came and pestered me with his chatter. I was in a state of drowsiness, half-asleep, conscious only of the brilliant light of the lamps and feeling in a gay and quiet mood. . . . The image of the "girl in red," with her head bent towards her shoulder, and her eyes filled with horror at the thought of that effective death, stood before me and quietly shook its little finger at me. . . . The image of another girl, with a pale, proud face, in a black dress, flitted past. She looked at me half-entreatingly, half-reproachfully.

Later on I heard noise, laughter, running about. . . . Deep, dark eyes obscured the light. I saw their brilliancy, their laughter. . . . A joyful smile played about the luscious lips. . . . That was how my gipsy Tina smiled.

"Is it you?" her voice asked. "You're asleep? Get up, darling. . . . How long is it since I saw you last!"

I silently pressed her hand and drew her towards me. . . .

"Let us go there. . . . We have all come. . . ."

"Stay! . . . I'm all right here, Tina. . . "

"But . . . there's too much light. . . . You're mad! . . . They can come. . . ."

"I'll wring the neck of whoever comes! . . . I'm so happy, Tina. . . . Two years have passed since last we met. . . ."

Somebody began to play the piano in the ballroom.

"Akh! Moskva, Moskva, Moskva, white-stoned Moskva!" . . . several voices sang in chorus.

"You see, they are all singing there. . . . Nobody will come in. . . ."

"Yes, yes. . . ."

The meeting with Tina took away my drowsiness. . . . Ten minutes later she led me into the ballroom, where the chorus was standing in a semi-circle. . . . The Count, sitting astride on a chair, was beating time with his hands. . . . Pshekhotsky stood behind his chair, looking with astonished eyes at these singing birds. I tore the balalaika out of Karpov's hands, struck the chords and—

"Down the Volga. . . . Down the mother Volga."

"Down the Vo-o-o-lga!" the chorus chimed in.

"Ay, burn, speak . . . speak . . ."

I waved my hand, and in an instant with the rapidity of lightning there was another transition. . . .

"Nights of madness, nights of gladness. . . ."

Nothing acts more irritatingly, more titillatingly on my nerves than such rapid transitions. I trembled with rapture, and embracing Tina with one arm and waving the balalaika in the air with the other hand, I sang "Nights of madness" to the end. . . . The balalaika

ell noisily on the floor and was shiv-red into tiny fragments. . . .

"Wine!"

After that my recollections are con-used and chaotic. . . . Everything is nixed, confused, entangled; everything s dim, obscure. . . . I remember the rey sky of early morning. . . . We re in a boat. . . . The lake is slightly gitated, and seems to grumble at our ebauchery. . . . I am standing up in he middle of the boat, shaking it. . . . Tina tries to convince me I may fall nto the water, and implores me to sit own. . . . I deplore loudly that there re no waves on the lake as high as the Stone Grave," and frighten the martins hat flit like white spots over the blue urface of the lake with my shouts. . . Then follows a long, sultry day, vith its endless lunches, its ten-year-old queurs, its punches, . . . its de-auches. . . . There are only a few noments I can remember of that day. . . I remember swinging with Tina n the garden. I stand on one end of he board, she on the other. I work nergetically, with my whole body as nuch as my strength permits, and I on't exactly know what I want: that Tina should fall from the swing and be illed, or that she should fly to the very louds! Tina stands there, pale as eath, but proud and self-loving; she as pressed her lips tightly together so s not to betray by a single sound the ear she feels. We fly ever higher and igher, and . . . I can't remember ow it ended. Then there follows a valk with Tina in a distant avenue of he park, with green vaults above that rotect it from the sun. A poetical twi-ght, black tresses, luscious lips, whis-ers. . . . Then the little contralto is walking beside me, a fair-haired girl with a sharp little nose, childlike eyes and a small waist. I walk about with her until Tina, having followed us, makes a scene. . . . The gipsy is pale and maddened. . . . She calls me "ac-cursed," and, being offended, prepares to return to town. The Count, also pale and with trembling hands, runs along beside us, and, as usual, can't find the proper words to persuade Tina to re-main. . . . In the end she boxes my ears. . . . Strange! I, who fly into a rage at the slightest offensive words said by a man, am quite indifferent to a box on the ear given me by a woman. . . . There is again a long "after dinner," again a snake on the steps, again sleep-ing Franz with flies round his mouth, again the gate. . . . "The girl in red" is standing on the "Stone Grave," but perceiving us from afar, she disappears like a lizard.

By evening we had made it up with Tina and were again friends. The eve-ning was succeeded by the same sort of stormy night, with music, daring sing-ing, with nerve exciting transitions . . . and not a moment's sleep!

"This is self-destruction!" Urbenin whispered to me. He had come in for a moment to listen to our singing.

He was certainly right. Further, I remember: the Count and I are stand-ing in the garden face to face, and quarrelling. Black-browed Kaetan is walking about near us all the time, taking no part in our jollifications, nevertheless he had also not slept, but had followed us about like a shadow. . . . The sky is already brightening, and on the very summits of the highest trees the golden rays of the rising sun are beginning to shine. Around us is

the chatter of sparrows, the songs of the starlings, and the rustle and flapping of wings that had become heavy during the night. . . . The lowing of the herds and the cries of the shepherds can be heard. A table with a marble slab stands before us. On the table are candles that give out a faint light. Ends of cigarettes, papers from sweets, broken wineglasses, orange peel. . . .

"You must take it!" I say, pressing on the Count a parcel of rouble notes. "I will force you to take it!"

"But it was I who sent for them and not you!" the Count insisted, trying to catch hold of one of my buttons. "I am the master here. . . . I treated you. Why should you pay? Can't you understand you even insult me by offering to do so?"

"I also engaged them, so I pay half. You won't take it? I don't understand such favours! Surely you don't think because you are as rich as the devil that you have the right to confer such favours on me? The devil take it! I engaged Karpov, and I will pay him! I want none of your halves! I wrote the telegram!"

"In a restaurant, Serezha, you may pay as much as you like, but my house is not a restaurant. . . . Besides, I really don't understand why you are making all this fuss. I can't understand your insistent prodigality. You have but little money, while I am rolling in wealth. . . . Justice itself is on my side!"

"Then you will not take it? No? Well, then, you needn't! . . ."

I go up to the faintly burning candles and applying the banknotes to the flame set them on fire and fling them on the ground. Suddenly a groan is torn from Kaetan's breast. He opens his eyes wide, he grows pale, and falling with the whole weight of his heavy body on the ground tries to extinguish the money with the palms of his hands. . . . In this he succeeds.

"I don't understand!" he says, placing the slightly burnt notes in his pocket. "To burn money? As if it were last year's chaff or love letters! . . . It's better that I should give it to the poor than let it be consumed by the flames."

I go into the house. . . . There in every room on the sofas and the carpets the weary gipsies are lying, overcome by fatigue. My Tina is sleeping on the divan in the "mosaic drawing room."

She lies stretched out and breathing heavily. Her teeth clenched, her face pale. . . . She is evidently dreaming of the swing. . . . The Scops-Owl is going through all the rooms, looking with her sharp eyes sardonically at the people who had so suddenly broken into the deadly quiet of this forgotten estate. . . . She is not going about and giving her old limbs so much trouble without an object.

That is all that my memory retained after two wild nights; all the rest had escaped my drunken brain, or is not appropriate for description. . . . But this is enough!

At no other time had Zorka borne me with so much zest as on the morning after the burning of the banknotes. . . . She also wanted to go home. . . . The lake quietly rippled its sparkling waves in which the rising sun was reflected and prepared for its daily sleep. The woods and the willows that border the lake stood motionless as if in morn

ng prayer. It is difficult to describe the eelings that filled my soul at the time. . . Without entering into details, I ill only say that I was unspeakably lad and at the same time almost con-umed by shame when, turning out of ne Count's homestead, I saw on the ank of the lake the holy old face, all rinkled by honest work and illness, f venerable Mikhey. In appearance likhey resembles the fishermen of the ible. His hair and beard are white as now, and he gazes contemplatively at he sky. . . . When he stands motion-ess on the bank and his eyes follow he chasing clouds, you can imagine hat he sees angels in the sky. . . . I ke such faces! . . .

When I saw him I reined in Zorka nd gave him my hand as if I wanted o cleanse myself by the touch of his onest, horny palm. . . . He raised is small sagacious eyes on me and miled.

"How do you do, good master!" he aid, giving me his hand awkwardly. So you've ridden over again? Or has hat old rake come back?"

"Yes, he's back."

"I thought so. . . . I can see it by our face. . . . Here I stand and look. . . The world's the world. Vanity of anities. . . . Look there! That erman ought to die, and he only thinks f vanities. . . . Do you see?"

The old man pointed with a stick at he Count's bathing-house. A boat was eing rowed away quickly from the athing-house. A man in a jockey cap nd a blue jacket was sitting in the oat. It was Franz, the gardener.

"Every morning he takes money to he island and hides it there. The stupid ellow can't understand that for him sand and money have much the same value. When he dies he can't take it with him. Barin, give me a cigar!"

I offered him my cigar case. He took three cigarettes and put them into his breast pocket. . . .

"That's for my nephew. . . . He can smoke them."

Zorka moved impatiently, and galloped off. I bowed to the old man in gratitude for having been allowed to rest my eyes on his face. For a long time he stood looking after me.

At home I was met by Polycarp. With a contemptuous, a crushing glance, he measured my noble body as if he wanted to know whether this time I had bathed again in all my clothes, or not.

"Congratulations!" he grumbled. "You've enjoyed yourself."

"Hold your tongue, fool!" I said.

His stupid face angered me. I undressed quickly, covered myself with the bedclothes and closed my eyes.

My head became giddy and the world was enveloped in mist. Familiar figures flitted throught the mist. . . . The Count, snakes, Franz, flame-coloured dogs, "the girl in red," mad Nikolai Efimych.

"The husband killed his wife! Oh, how stupid you are!"

"The girl in red" shook her finger at me, Tina obscured the light with her black eyes, and . . . I fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII

THIEVES SWARMING

"How sweetly and tranquilly he sleeps! When one gazes on this pale, tired face, on this childishly innocent smile, and listens to this regular breath-

ing, one might think that it is not a magistrate who is lying here, but the personification of a quiet conscience! One might think that Count Karnéev had not yet arrived, that there had been neither drunkenness nor gipsies, nor rows on the lake. . . . Get up, you pernicious man! You are unworthy of enjoying such a blessing as peaceful sleep! Arise!"

I opened my eyes and stretched myself voluptuously. . . . A broad sunbeam, in which countless white dust atoms were agitated and chased each other, streamed from the window on to my bed, causing the sunray itself to appear as if tinged with some dull whiteness. . . . The ray disappeared and reappeared before my eyes, as Pavel Ivanovich Voznesensky, our charming district doctor, who was walking about my bedroom, came into or went out of the stream of light. In the long, unbuttoned frockcoat that flapped around him, as if hanging on a clothes rack, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his unusually long trousers, the doctor went from corner to corner of my room, from chair to chair, from portrait to portrait, screwing up his short-sighted eyes as he examined whatever came in his way. In accordance with his habit of sticking his nose and letting his eyes peer into everything, he either stooped down or stretched out, peeped into the washstand, into the folds of the closed blinds, into the chinks of the door, into the lamp . . . he seemed to be looking for something or wishing to assure himself that everything was in order. . . . When he looked attentively through his spectacles into a chink, or at a spot on the wallpaper, he frowned, assumed an anxious expression, and smelt it with his long nose. . . . All this he did quite mechanically, involuntarily, and from habit; but at the same time, as his eyes passed rapidly from one object to another, he had the appearance of a connoisseur making an evaluation.

"Get up, don't you hear!" he called to me in his melodious tenor voice, as he looked into the soap-dish and removed a hair from the soap with his nail.

"Ah, ah, ah! How do you do, Mr. Screw!" I yawned, when I saw him bending over the washstand. "What an age we haven't met!"

The whole district knew the doctor by the name of "Screw" from the habit he had of constantly screwing up his eyes. I, too, called him by that nickname. Seeing that I was awake, Voznesensky came and sat down on a corner of my bed and at once took up a box of matches and lifted it close to his screwed-up eyes.

"Only lazy people and those with clear consciences sleep in that way," he said, "and as you are neither the one nor the other, it would be more seemly for you, my friend, to get up somewhat earlier. . . ."

"What o'clock is it?"

"Almost eleven."

"The devil take you, Screwy! Nobody asked you to wake me so early. Do you know, I only got to sleep at past five to-day, and if not for you I would have slept on till evening."

"Indeed!" I heard Polycarp's bass voice say in the next room. "He hasn't slept long enough yet! It's the second day he's sleeping, and it's still too little for him. Do you know what day it is?" Polycarp asked, coming into the bed-

om and looking at me in the way lever people look at fools.

"Wednesday," I said.

"Of course, certainly! It's been spe-ially arranged for you that the week hall have two Wednesdays. . . ."

"To-day's Thursday!" the doctor aid. "So, my good fellow, you've been leasea to sleep through the whole of Wednesday. Fine! Very fine! Allow ne to ask you how much you drank?"

"For twice twenty-four hours I had ot slept, and I drank . . . I don't now how much I drank."

Having sent Polycarp away, I began o dress and describe to the doctor what had lately experienced of "Nights of adness, nights of gladness" which are o delightful and sentimental in the ongs and so unsightly in reality. In ny description I tried not to go beyond ne bounds of "light genre," to keep to acts and not to deviate into moral-zing, although all this was contrary to ne nature of a man who entertained a assion for inferences and results. . . . spoke with an air as if I was speak-ng about trifles that did not trouble me n the slightest degree. In order to spare ne chaste ears of Pavel Ivanovich, and nowing his dislike of the Count, I sup-ressed much, touched lightly on a great eal but nevertheless, despite the play-ulness of my tone and the style of aricature I gave to my narrative dur-ng the whole course of it, the doctor ooked into my face seriously, shaking is head and shrugging his shoulders npatiently from time to time. He ever once smiled. It was evident that y "light genre" produced on him far om a light effect.

"Why don't you laugh, Screwy?" I asked when I had finished my descrip-tion.

"If it had not been you who had told me all this, and if there had not been a certain circumstance, I would not have believed a word of it. It's all too abnormal, my friend!"

"Of what circumstance are you speak-ing?"

"Last evening the muzhik whom you had belaboured in such an indelicate way with an oar, came to me. . . . Ivan Osipov. . . ."

"Ivan Osipov? . . ." I shrugged my shoulders. "It's the first time I hear his name!"

"A tall, red-haired man . . . with a freckled face. . . . Try to remem-ber! You struck him on the head with an oar."

"I can't remember anything! I don't know an Osipov. . . . I struck nobody with an oar. . . . You've dreamed it all, uncle!"

"God grant that I dreamed it. . . . He came to me with a report from the Karnéev district administration and asked me for a medical certificate. . . . In the report it was stated that the wound was given him by you, and he does not lie. . . . Can you remember now? The wound he had received was above the forehead, just where the hair begins. . . . You got to the bone, my dear sir!"

"I can't remember!" I murmured. . . . "Who is he? What's his occupa-tion?"

"He's an ordinary muzhik from the Karnéev village. He rowed the boat when you were having your spree on the lake."

"Hm! Perhaps! I can't remember.

. . . I was probably drunk, and somehow by chance. . . ."

"No, sir, not by chance. . . . He said you got angry with him about something, you swore at him for a long time, and then getting furious you rushed at him and struck him before witnesses. . . . Besides, you shouted at him: 'I'll kill you, you rascal!' "

"I got very red, and began walking about from corner to corner of the room.

"For the life of me, I can't remember!" I said, trying with all my might to recall what had happened. "I can't remember! You say I 'got furious. . . .' When drunk I become unpardonably nasty!"

"What can you want more!"

"The muzhik evidently wants to make a case of it, but that's not the most important. . . . The most important is the fact itself, the blows. . . . Is it possible that I'm capable of fighting? And why should I strike a poor muzhik?"

"Yes, sir! Of course, I could not give him a certificate, but I told him to apply to you. . . . You'll manage to arrange the matter with him somehow. . . . The wound is a slight one, but considering the case unofficially a wound in the head that goes as far as the skull is a serious affair. . . . There are often cases when an apparently trifling wound in the head which had been considered a slight one has ended with mortification of the bone of the skull and consequently with a journey *ad patres*."

And, carried away by his subject, "Screw" rose from his seat and, walking about the room along the walls and waving his hands, he began to unload all his knowledge of surgical pathology for my benefit. . . . Mortification of the bones of the skull, inflammation of the brain, death, and other horrors poured from his lips with endless explanations, macroscopic and microscopic processes, that accompany this misty and, for me, quite uninteresting *terra incognita*.

"Stop that effusion!" I cried, trying to stop his medical chatter. "Can't you understand how tiresome all this stuff is?"

"No matter that it's tiresome. . . . Listen, and punish yourself. . . . Perhaps another time you will be more careful. It may teach you not to do such stupidities. If you don't arrange matters with this scabby Osipov, it may cost you your position! The priest of Themis to be tried for thrashing a man! . . . What a scandal!"

Pavel Ivanovich is the only man whose judgments I listen to with a light heart, without frowning, whom I allow to gaze inquiringly into my eyes and to thrust his investigating hand into the depths of my soul. . . . We two are friends in the very best sense of the word; we respect each other, although we have between us accounts of the most unpleasant, the most delicate nature. . . . Like a black cat, a woman had passed between us. This eternal *casus belli* had been the cause of reckonings between us, but did not make us quarrel, and we continued to be at peace. "Screw" is a very nice fellow. I like his simple and far from plastic face, with its large nose, screwed-up eyes and thin, reddish beard. I like his tall, thin, narrow-shouldered figure, on which his frock-coat and paletot hung as on a clothes-horse.

His badly made trousers formed ugly
reases at the knees; and his boots were
rribly trodden down at the heels; his
hite tie was always in the wrong place.
ut do not think that he was slovenly.
. . You had but to look once at his
nd, concentrated face to understand
at he had no time to trouble about
s own appearance; besides, he did not
now how to. . . . He was young,
onest, not vain, and loved his medi-
ne, and he was always moving about—
is in itself is sufficient to explain to
s advantage all the defects of his in-
egant toilet. He, like an artist, did
ot know the value of money, and im-
erturbably sacrificed his own comfort
nd the blessings of life to one of his
assions, and thus he gave the impres-
on of being a man without means,
ho could scarcely make both ends
eet. . . . He neither smoked nor
rank, he spent no money on women,
ut nevertheless the two thousand
oubles he earned by his appointment at
e hospital and by private practice
assed through his hands as quickly as
y money does when I am out on the
ree. Two passions drained him: the
assion of lending money, and the pas-
on of ordering things he saw adver-
sed in the newspapers. . . . He lent
oney to whoever asked for it, without
y demur not uttering a single word
out when it was to be returned. It
as not possible either by hook or by
ook to eradicate in him his heedless
ust in people's conscientiousness, and
is confidence was even more apparent
his constantly ordering things that
ere lauded in newspaper advertise-
ents. . . . He wrote for everything,
e necessary and the unnecessary. He
rote for books, telescopes, humorous magazines, dinner services "composed of 100 articles," chronometers. . . . And it was not surprising that the patients who came to Pavel Ivanovich mistook his room for an arsenal or for a museum. He had always been cheated, but his trust was as strong and unshakable as ever. He was a capital fellow, and we shall meet him more than once on the pages of this novel.

"Good gracious! What a time I have been sitting here!" he exclaimed suddenly, looking at the cheap watch with one lid he had ordered from Moscow, and which was "guaranteed for five years," but had already been repaired twice. "I must be off, friend! Goodbye! And mark my words, these sprees of the Count's will lead to no good! To say nothing about your health. . . . Oh, by-the-by! Shall you go to Tenevo to-morrow?"

"What's up there to-morrow?"

"The fête of the Church! Everybody will be there, so come too! You must positively come! I have promised that you will come. Don't make me a liar!"

It was not necessary to ask to whom he had given his word. We understood each other. The doctor then took leave, put on his well-worn overcoat, and went away.

I remained alone. . . . In order to drown the unpleasant thoughts that began to swarm in my head, I went to my writing-table and trying not to think nor to call myself to account, I began to open my post. The first envelope that caught my eye contained the following letter:

"My Darling Serezha,

"Forgive me for troubling you, but I am so surprised that I don't know to

whom to apply. . . . It is shameful! Of course, now it will be impossible to get it back, and I'm not sorry, but judge for yourself: if thieves are to enjoy indulgence, a respectable woman cannot feel safe anywhere. After you left I awoke on the divan and found many of my things were missing. Somebody had stolen my bracelet, my gold studs, ten pearls out of my necklace, and had taken about a hundred roubles out of my purse. I wanted to complain to the Count, but he was asleep, so I went away without doing so. This is very wrong! The Count's house—and they steal as in a tavern! Tell the Count. I send you much love and kisses.

"Your loving,

"TINA."

That his Excellency's house was swarming with thieves was nothing new to me; and I added Tina's letter to the information I had already in my memory on this count. Sooner or later I would be obliged to use this intelligence in a case. . . . I knew who the thieves were.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH

BLACK-EYED Tina's letter, her large sprawling handwriting, reminded me of the mosaic room and aroused in me desires such as a drunkard has for more drink; but I overcame them, and by the strength of my will I forced myself to work. At first I found it unspeakably dull to decipher the bold handwriting of the various commissaries, but gradually my attention became fixed on a burglary, and I began to work with delight. All day long I sat working at my table, and Polycarp passed behind me from time to time and looked suspiciously at my work. He had no confidence in my sobriety, and at any moment he expected to see me rise from the table and order Zorka to be saddled; but towards evening, seeing my persistence, he began to give credence to my good intentions, and the expression of moroseness on his face gave place to one of satisfaction. . . . He began to walk about on tiptoe and to speak in whispers. . . . When some young fellows passed my house, playing on the accordion, he went into the street and shouted:

"What do you young devils mean by making such a row here? Can't you go another way? Don't you know, you Mahommedans, that the master is working?"

In the evening when he served the samovar in the dining-room, he quietly opened my door and called me graciously to come to tea.

"Will you please come to tea?" he said, sighing gently and smiling respectfully.

And while I was drinking my tea he came up behind me and kissed me on the shoulder.

"Now that's better, Sergei Petrovich," he mumbled. "Why don't you let that white-eyebrowed devil be hanged, may he be. . . . Is it possible with your high understanding and your education to occupy yourself with pusillanimousness? Your work is noble. . . . Everybody must glorify you, be afraid of you; if you break people's heads with that devil and bathe in the lake in all your clothes, everyone will say: 'He has no sense! He's an empty-headed fellow!' And so that reputation will be

oised about the whole world! Fool-ardiness is suitable for merchants, but ot for noblemen. . . . Noblemen re-uire science and office. . . ."

"All right! Enough, enough. . . ."

"Sergey Petrovich, don't keep com-any with that Count. If you want to ave a friend, who could be better than Doctor Pavel Ivanovich? He goes about habbily dressed, but how clever he is!"

I was melted by Polycarp's sincerity. . . I wanted to say an affectionate ord to him. . . .

"What novel are you reading now?" asked.

" 'The Count of Monte Cristo.' That's Count for you! That's a real Count! Not like your smut-Count!"

After tea I again sat down to work nd worked until my eyelids began to roop and close my tired eyes. . . . When I went to bed I ordered Polycarp o wake me at five o'clock.

The next morning, before six o'clock, histling gaily and knocking off the eads of the field flowers, I was walk-g towards Tenevo, where the fête of ne church to which my friend "Screw" ad invited me to come was being cele-rated that day. It was a glorious orning. Happiness itself appeared to e hanging above the earth, and re-ected in every dewdrop, enticed the ul of the passer-by to itself. The oods enwrapped in morning light, were uiet and motionless as if listening to y footsteps, and the chirping brother-ood of birds met me with expressions mistrust and alarm. . . . The air, im-regnated with the evaporation of the esh green, caressed my healthy lungs ith its softness. I breathed it in, and sting my enraptured eyes over the hole distant prospect, I felt the spring and youth, and it seemed to me that the young birches, the grass at the road-side, and the ceaselessly humming cock-chafers shared these feelings with me.

"Why is it that there in the world men crowd together in their miserable hovels, in their narrow and limited ideas," I thought, "while they have here so much space for life and thought? Why do they not come here?"

And my poetic imagination refused to be disturbed by thoughts of winter and of bread, those two sorrows that drive poets into cold, prosaic Petersburg and uncleanly Moscow, where fees are paid for verse, but no inspiration can be found.

Peasants' carts and landowners' britz-kas hurrying to the liturgy or to market passed me constantly as I trudged along. All the time I had to take off my cap in answer to the courteous bows of the muzhiks and the landowners of my ac-quaintance. They all offered to give me a lift, but to walk was pleasanter than to drive, and I refused all their offers. Among others the Count's gardener, Franz, in a blue jacket and a jockey cap, passed me on a racing droshky. . . . He looked lazily at me with his sleepy, sour eyes and touched his cap in a still more lazy fashion. Behind him a twelve-gallon barrel with iron hoops, evidently for vodka, was tied to the droshky. . . . Franz's disagreeable phiz and his barrel somewhat disturbed my poetical mood, but very soon poetry triumphed again when I heard the sound of wheels behind me, and looking round I saw a heavy wagonette drawn by a pair of bays, and in the heavy wagon-ette, on a leathern cushion on a sort of box seat, was my new acquaintance, "the girl in red," who two days before

had spoken to me about the "electricity that had killed her mother." Olenka's pretty, freshly washed and somewhat sleepy face beamed and blushed slightly when she saw me striding along the footpath that separated the wood from the road. She nodded merrily to me and smiled in the affable manner of an old acquaintance.

"Good morning!" I shouted to her.

She kissed her hand to me and disappeared from my sight, together with her heavy wagonette, without giving me enough time to admire her fresh, pretty face. This day she was not dressed in red. She wore a sort of dark green costume with large buttons and a broad-brimmed straw hat, but even in this garb she pleased me no less than she had done before. I would have talked to her with pleasure, and I would gladly have heard her voice. I wanted to gaze into her deep eyes in the brilliancy of the sun, as I had gazed into them that night by the flashes of lightning. I wanted to take her down from the ugly wagonette and propose that she should walk beside me for the rest of the way, and I certainly would have done so if it had not been for the "rules of society." For some reason it appeared to me that she would have gladly agreed to this proposal. It was not without some cause that she had twice looked back at me as the wagonette disappeared behind some old alders! . . .

It was about six versts from the place of my abode to Tenevo—nothing of a distance for a young man on a fine morning. Shortly after six I was already making my way between loaded carts and the booths of the fair towards the Tenevo church. Notwithstanding the early hour and the fact that the liturgy in the church was not over as yet, the noise of trade was already in the air. The squeaking of cart wheels, the neighing of horses, the lowing of cattle and the sounds of toy trumpets were intermixed with the cries of gipsy horse dealers and the songs of muzhiks, who had already found time to get drunk. What numbers of gay, idle faces! What types! What beauty there was in the movements of these masses, bright with brilliant coloured dresses, on which the morning sun poured its light! All this many-thousand-headed crowd swarmed, moved, made a noise in order to finish the business they had to do in a few hours, and to disperse by the evening, leaving after them, on the market place as a sort of remembrance, refuse of hay, oats spilt here and there, and nutshells. . . . The people, in dense crowds, were going to and coming from the church.

The cross that surmounts the church emitted golden rays, bright as those of the sun. It glittered and seemed to be aflame with golden fire. Beneath it the cupola of the church was burning with the same fire, and the freshly painted green dome shone in the sun, and beyond the sparkling cross the clear blue sky stretched out in the far distance. I passed through the crowds in the churchyard and entered the church. The liturgy had only just begun and the Gospel was being read. The silence of the church was only broken by the voice of the reader and the footsteps of the incensing deacon. The people stood silent and immovable, gazing with reverence through the wide-open holy gates of the altar and listening to the drawling voice of the reader. Village decorum, or, to speak more correctly, village propriety, strictly represses every in

ination to violate the reverend quiet
the church. I always felt ashamed
hen in a church anything caused me
smile or speak. Unfortunately it is
ut seldom that I do not meet some of
y acquaintances who, I regret to say,
e only too numerous, and it generally
ppens that I have hardly entered the
urch before I am accosted by one of
e "intelligentsia," who, after a long
troduction about the weather, begins
conversation on his own trivial affairs.
answer "yes" and "no," but I am too
nsiderate to refuse to give him any
tention. My consideration often costs
e dear. While I talk I glance bash-
lly at my neighbours who are praying,
aring that my idle chatter may wound
em.

This time, as usual, I did not escape
om acquaintances. When I entered
e church I saw my heroine standing
se to the door—that same "girl in
d" whom I had met on the way to
enevo.

Poor little thing! There she stood,
d as a crawfish, and perspiring in the
idst of the crowd, casting imploring
ances on all those faces in the search
r a deliverer. She had stuck fast in
e densest crowd and, unable to move
her forward or backward, looked like
bird who was being tightly squeezed
a fist. When she saw me she smiled
tterly and began nodding her pretty
in.

"For God's sake, escort me to the
nt!" she said, seizing hold of my
eve. "It is terribly stuffy here—and
crowded. . . . I beg you!"

"In front it will be as crowded," I
lied.

"But there, all the people are well
ssed and respectable. . . . Here are
only common people. A place is reserved for us in front. . . . You, too, ought to be there. . . ."

Consequently she was red not because it was stuffy and crowded in the church. Her little head was troubled by the question of precedence. I granted the vain girl's prayer, and by carefully pressing aside the people I was able to conduct her to the very dais near the altar on which the flower of our district *beau-monde* was collected. Having placed Olenka in a position that was in accordance with her aristocratic desires, I took up a post at the back of the *beau-monde* and began an inspection.

As usual, the men and women were whispering and giggling. The Justice of the Peace, Kalinin, gesticulating with his hands and shaking his head, was telling the landowner, Deryaev, in an undertone all about his ailments. Deryaev was abusing the doctors almost aloud and advising the justice of the peace to be treated by a certain Evstrat Ivanych. The ladies, perceiving Olenka, pounced upon her as a good subject for their criticism and began whispering. There was only one girl who evidently was praying. . . . She was kneeling, with her black eyes fixed in front of her; she was moving her lips. She did not notice a curl of hair that had got loose under her hat and was hanging in disorder over her temple. . . . She did not notice that Olenka and I had stopped beside her.

She was Nadezhda Nikolaevna, Justice Kalinin's daughter. When I spoke above of the woman, who, like a black cat, had run between the doctor and me, I was speaking of her. . . . The doctor loved her as only such noble natures as my dear "Screw's" are able

to love. Now he was standing beside her, as stiff as a pikestaff, with his hands at his sides and his neck stretched out. From time to time his loving eyes glanced inquiringly at her concentrated face. He seemed to be watching her prayer and in his eyes there shone a melancholy, passionate longing to be the object of her prayers. But, to his grief, he knew for whom she was praying. . . . It was not for him. . . .

I made a sign to Pavel Ivanovich when he looked round at me, and we both left the church.

"Let's stroll about the market," I proposed.

We lighted our cigarettes and went towards the booths.

CHAPTER IX

WHY?

"How is Nadezhda Nikolaevna?" I asked the doctor as we entered a tent where playthings were sold.

"Pretty well. . . . I think she's all right. . . ." the doctor replied, frowning at a little soldier with a lilac face and a crimson uniform. "She asked about you. . . ."

"What did she ask about me?"

"Things in general. . . . She is angry that you have not been to see them for so long . . . she wants to see you and to inquire the cause of your sudden coldness towards their house. . . . You used to go there nearly every day and then—dropped them! As if cut off. . . . You don't even bow."

"That's not true, Screw. . . . Want of leisure is really the cause of my ceasing to go to the Kalinins. What's true is true! My connexion with that family is as excellent as formerly. . . . I always bow if I happen to meet any one of them."

"However, last Thursday, when you met her father, for some reason you did not return his bow."

"I don't like that old blockhead of Justice," I said, "and I can't look with equanimity at his phiz; but I still have the strength to bow to him and to press the hand he stretches out to me. Perhaps I did not notice him on Thursday or I did not recognize him. You're not in a good humour to-day, Screwy, and are trying to pick a quarrel."

"I love you, my dear boy," Pavel Ivanovich sighed; "but I don't believe you. . . . 'Did not notice, did not recognize!' . . . I don't require your justifications nor your evasions. . . . What's the use of them when there is so little truth in them? You're an excellent, a good man, but there's a little bit of a screw sticking in your side brain that—forgive me for saying it—is capable of any offence."

"I'm humbly obliged."

"Don't be offended, golubchek. . . . God grant that I may be mistaken, but you appear to me to be somewhat of a psychopath. Sometimes, quite in spite of your will and the dictates of your excellent nature, you have attacks of such desires and commit such acts that all who know you as a respectable man are quite nonplussed. You make one marvel how your highly moral principles, which I have the honour of knowing, can exist together with your sudden impulses, which, in the end, produce the most screaming abominations! . . . What animal is this?" Pavel Ivanovich asked the salesman abruptly in quite another tone, lifting close to his eyes

ooden animal with a man's nose, a
ane, and a grey stripe down its back.
"A lion," the salesman answered,
wning. "Or perhaps some other sort
creature. The deuce only knows!"
From the toy booths we went to the
ops where textiles were sold and trade
as already very brisk.
"These toys only mislead children,"
e doctor said. "They give the falsest
eas of flora and fauna. For example,
is lion . . . striped, purple, and
ueaking. . . . Whoever heard of a
n that squeaks?"
"I say, Screwy," I began, "you evi-
ntly want to say something to me and
u seem not to be able. . . . Go
ead! . . . I like to hear you, even
nen you tell me unpleasant things. . . ."
"Whether pleasant or unpleasant,
iend, you must listen to me. There is
uch I want to talk to you about."
"Begin. . . . I am transformed into
e very large ear."
"I have already mentioned to you
y supposition that you are a psycho-
th. Now have the goodness to listen
the proofs. . . . I will speak quite
ankly, perhaps sometimes sharply.
. . My words may jar on you, but
n't be angry, friend. . . . You know
y feelings for you. I like you better
an anybody else in the district. . . .
speak not to reprove, nor to blame,
r to slay you. Let us both be ob-
ctive, friend. . . . Let us examine
ur psyche with an unprejudiced eye,
if it were a liver or a stomach. . . ."
"All right, let's be objective," I
reed.
"Excellent! . . . Then let us begin
ith your connexion with Kalinin. . . .
you consult your memory it will tell
u that you began to visit the Kalinins
immediately after your arrival in our God-protected district. Your acquaintance was not sought by them. At first you did not please the Justice of the Peace, owing to your arrogant manner, your sarcastic tone, and your friendship with the dissolute Count, and you would never have been in the Justice's house if you yourself had not paid him a visit. You remember? You became acquainted with Nadezhda Nikolaevna, and you began to frequent the Justice's house almost every day. . . . Whenever one came to the house you were sure to be there. . . . You were welcomed in the most cordial manner. You were shown all possible marks of friendship—by the father, the mother, and the little sister. . . . They became as much attached to you as if you were a relative. . . . They were enraptured by you . . . you were made much of, they were in fits of laughter over your slightest witticism. . . . You were for them the acme of wisdom, nobility, gentle manners. You appeared to understand all this, and you reciprocated their attachment with attachment—you went there every day, even on the eve of holidays—the days of cleaning and bustle. Lastly, the unhappy love that you aroused in Nadezhda's heart is no secret to you. . . . Is that not so? Well, then, you, knowing she was over head and ears in love with you, continued to go there day after day. . . . And what happened then, friend? A year ago, for no apparent reason, you suddenly ceased visiting the house. You were awaited for a week . . . a month. . . . They are still waiting for you, and you still don't appear . . . they write to you . . . you do not reply. . . . You end by not even bowing

. . . To you, who set so much store by decorum, such conduct must appear as the height of rudeness! Why did you break off your connexion with the Kalinins in such a sharp and off-hand manner? Did they offend you? No. . . . Did they bore you? In that case you might have broken off gradually, and not in such a sharp and insulting manner, for which there was no cause. . . ."

"I stopped visiting a house and therefore have become a psychopath!" I laughed. "How naive you are, Screwy! What difference is there if you suddenly cease an acquaintance or do so gradually? It's even more honest to do so suddenly—there's less hypocrisy in it. But what trifles all these are!"

"Let us admit that all this is trifling, or that the cause of your sharp action is a secret that does not concern other people. But how can you explain your further conduct?"

"For instance?"

"For instance, you appeared one day at meeting of our Zemstvo Board—I don't know what your business was there—and in reply to the president, who asked you how it came that you were no longer to be met at Kalinin's, you said. . . . Try to remember what you said! 'I'm afraid they want to marry me!' That's what fell from your lips! And this you said during the meeting in a loud and distinct voice, so that all the hundred men who were present could hear you! Pretty! In reply to your words laughter and various offensive witticisms about fishing for husbands could be heard on all sides. Your words were caught up by a certain scamp, who went to Kalinin's and repeated them to Nadenka during dinner. . . . Why such an insult, Sergei Petrovich?"

Pavel Ivanovich barred the way. He stood before me and continued looking at me with imploring, almost tearful eyes.

"Why such an insult? Why? Because this charming girl loves you? Let us admit that her father, like all fathers, had intentions in your person. . . . He is like all fathers, they all have an eye on you, on me, on Markuzin. . . . All parents are alike! . . . There's not the slightest doubt that she is over head and ears in love; perhaps she had hoped she would become your wife. . . . Is that a reason to give her such a sounding box on the ear? Dyadinka, dyadinka! Was it not you yourself who encouraged these intentions on your person? You went there every day, ordinary guests never go so often. In the daytime you went out fishing with her, in the evening you walked about the garden with her, jealously guarding your *tête-à-tête*. . . . You learned that she loved you, and you made not the slightest change in your conduct . . . Was it possible after that not to suspect you of having good intentions? I was convinced you would marry her! And you—you complained—you laughed! Why! What had she done to you?"

"Don't shout, Screwy, the people are staring at us," I said, getting round Pavel Ivanovich. "Let us change the conversation. It's old women's chatter. I'll explain in a few words, and that must be enough for you. I went to the Kalinins' house because I was dull and also because Nadenka interested me. She's a very interesting girl. . . . Perhaps I might even have married her

ut, finding out that you had preceded e as a candidate for her heart, that you ere not indifferent to her, I decided disappear. . . . It would have been uel on my part to stand in the way such a good fellow as yourself. . . ."

"Thanks for the favour! I never ked you for this gracious gift, and, far as I can judge by the expression your face, you are now not speaking e truth; you are talking nonsense not flecting on what you say. . . . And esides, the fact of my being a good llow did not hinder you on one of our last meetings with Nadenka to ake her some proposals in the summer-ouse, which would have brought no ood to the excellent young fellow if he ad married her."

"O-ho! Screwy, where did you find ut about this proposal? It seems that our affairs are not going on badly, if ch secrets are confided to you! . . . owever, you've grown white with rage d almost look as if you were going to rike me. . . . And just now we agreed be objective! Screwy, what a funny llow you are! Well, we've had about ough of all this nonsense. . . . Let's to the post office. . . ."

CHAPTER X

THE DARK FIGURE

We went to the post office, which oked out gaily with its three little indows on to the market place. hrough the grey paling gleamed the any coloured flower garden of our post-aster, Maxim Federovich, who was nown in the whole district as a great onnoisseur of all that concerned gar-ning and the art of laying out beds, orders, lawns, etc.

We found Maxim Fedorovich very pleasantly occupied. Smiling, and red with pleasure, he was seated at his green table, turning over hundred-rouble notes as if they were a book. Evidently even the sight of another man's money had a pleasing effect on his frame of mind.

"How do you do, Maxim Fedorovich?" I said to him. "Where have you got such a pile of money?"

"It's to be sent to St. Petersburg," the postmaster replied, smiling sweetly, and he pointed his chin at the corner of the room where a dark figure was sitting on the only chair in the post office.

This dark figure rose when he saw me and came towards us. I recognized my new acquaintance, my new enemy, whom I had so grievously insulted when I had got drunk at the Count's.

"My best greetings!" he said.

"How are you, Kaetan Kazimirovich?" I answered, pretending not to notice his outstretched hand. "How's the Count?"

"Thank God, he's quite well. . . . He's only a little dull. . . . He's expecting you to come every minute."

I read on Pshekhotsky's face the desire to converse with me. How could that desire have arisen after the "swine" with which I had treated him on that evening, and what caused this change of tone?

"What a lot of money you have!" I said, gazing at the packet of hundred-rouble notes he was sending away.

It seemed as if somebody had given a fillip to my brain! I noticed that one of the hundred-rouble notes had charred edges, and one corner had been quite burnt off. . . . It was the hundred-rouble note which I had wanted to burn in the flame of a Chandor candle, when

the Count refused to accept it from me as my share of the payment for the gipsies, and which Pshekhotsky had picked up when I flung it on the ground.

"It's better that I should give it to the poor, than let it be consumed by the flames," he had said then.

To what "poor" was he sending it now?

"Seven thousand five hundred roubles," Maxim Fedorovich counted in a drawling voice. "Quite right!"

It is ill to pry into the secrets of other people, but I wanted terribly to find out whose this money was and to whom this black-browed Pole was sending it to Petersburg. This money was certainly not his, and the Count had nobody to whom he would send it.

"He has plundered the drunken Count," I thought. "If deaf and silly Scops-Owl knows how to plunder the Count, what difficulty will this goose have in thrusting his paw into his pockets?"

"Oh, by-the-by, I'll also take this opportunity of sending some money," Pavel Ivanovich said hastily. "Do you know, gentlemen, it's quite incredible! For fifteen roubles you can get five things, carriage free! A telescope, a chronometer, a calendar, and something more. . . . Maxim Fedorovich, kindly let me have a sheet of paper and an envelope!"

Screw sent off his fifteen roubles, I received my newspaper and a letter, and we left the post office.

We went towards the church. Screwy paced after me, as pale and dismal as an autumn day. The conversation in which he had tried to show himself to be "objective" had excited him quite beyond all expectation.

All the church bells were being rung. An apparently endless crowd was slowly descending the steps that led from the church porch.

Ancient banners and a dark cross were held high above the crowd, at the head of the procession. The sun played gaily on the vestments of the priests, and the icon of the Holy Virgin emitted blinding rays. . . .

"Ah, there are our people!" the doctor said, pointing to the *beau-monde* of our district which had separated itself from the crowd and was standing aside.

"Your people, but not mine," I said.

"That's all the same. . . . Let us join them. . . ."

I approached my acquaintances and bowed. The Justice of the Peace, Kaninin, a tall, broad-shouldered man with a grey beard and crawfish-like eyes, was standing in front of all the others, whispering something in his daughter's ear. Trying to appear as if he had not noticed me, he made not the slightest movement in answer to my general salute that had been made in his direction.

"Good-bye, my angel," he said in a lachrymose voice as he kissed his daughter on the forehead. "Drive home alone. I shall be back by evening. My visits will take but little time."

Having kissed his daughter again and smiled sweetly on the *beau-monde*, he frowned fiercely, and turning sharply round on one heel, towards a muzhik wearing the disc of a foreman, he said hoarsely to him:

"When will they allow my carriage to drive up?"

The muzhik became excited and waved his arms.

"Look out!"

The crowd that was following the rocession made way and the carriage f the Justice of the Peace drove up ith chic and the sound of bells to here Kalinin was standing. He sat own, bowed majestically, and alarm-g the crowd by his "Look out!" he sappeared from sight without casting single glance at me.

"What a majestic swine!" I whispered the doctor's ear. "Come along!"

"Don't you want to say a word to adezhda Nicolaevna?" Pavel Ivanovich ked:

"It's time for me to go home. I'm a hurry."

The doctor looked at me angrily, ghed, and turned away. I made a eneral bow and went towards the ooths. As I was making my way rough the dense crowd, I turned to ok back at the Justice's daughter. She as looking after me and appeared to be ying whether I could bear her pure, arching gaze, so full of bitter injury id reproach.

Her eyes said: "Why?"

Something stirred in my breast, and felt remorse and shame for my silly nduct. I suddenly felt a wish to re-rn and caress and fondle with all the rength of my soft, and not yet quite rrupt, soul this girl who loved me ssionately, and who had been so ievously wronged by me; and to tell r that it was not I who was in fault, t my accursed pride that prevented e from living, breathing or advancing step. Silly, conceited, foppish pride, ll of vanity. Could I, a frivolous nn, stretch out the hand of reconcilia-n, when I knew and saw that every e of my movements was watched by the eyes of the district gossips and the "ill-omened old women"? Sooner let them laugh her to scorn and cover her with derisive glances and smiles, than undeceive them of the "inflexibility" of my character and the pride, which silly women admired so much in me.

Just before, when I had spoken with Pavel Ivanovich about the reasons that had caused me suddenly to cease my visits to the Kalinins, I had not been candid and quite inaccurate. . . . I had held back the real reason; I had concealed it because I was ashamed of its triviality. . . . The cause was as tiny as a grain of dust. . . . It was this. On the occasion of my last visit, after I had given up Zorka to the coachman and was entering the Kalinin's house, the following phrase reached my ears:

"Nadenka, where are you? . . . Your betrothed has come!"

These words were spoken by her father, the Justice of the Peace, who probably did not think that I might hear him. But I heard him, and my self-love was aroused.

"I her betrothed?" I thought. "Who allowed you to call me her betrothed? On what basis?"

And something snapped in my breast. Pride rebelled within me, and I forgot all I had remembered when riding to Kalinin's. . . . I forgot that I had allured the young girl, and I myself was being attracted by her to such a degree that I was unable to pass a single evening without her company. . . . I forgot her lovely eyes that never left my memory either by night or day, her kind smile, her melodious voice. . . . I forgot the quiet summer evenings that will never return either for her or me. . . .

Everything had crumbled away before the pressure of the devilish pride that had been aroused by the silly phrase of her simple-minded father. . . . I left the house in a rage, mounted Zorka, and galloped off, vowing to snub Kalinin, who without my permission had dared to consider me as his daughter's betrothed.

"Besides, Voznesensky is in love with her," I thought, trying to justify my sudden departure, as I rode home. "He began to twirl around her before I did, and they were considered to be engaged when I made her acquaintance. I won't interfere with him!"

From that day I never put a foot in Kalinin's house, though there were moments when I suffered from longing to see Nadia, and my soul yearned for the renewal of the past. . . . But the whole district knew of the rupture, knew that I had "bolted" from marriage. . . . How could my pride make concessions?

Who can tell? If Kalinin had not said those words, and if I had not been so stupidly proud and touchy, perhaps I would not have had to look back, nor she to gaze at me with such eyes. . . . But even those eyes were better, even the feeling of being wronged and of reproach was better, than what I saw in those eyes a few months after our meeting in the Tenevo church! The grief that shone in the depths of those black eyes now was only the beginning of the terrible misfortune that, like the sudden onrush of a train, swept that girl from the earth. They were like little flowers compared to those berries that were then already ripening in order to pour terrible poison into her frail body and anguished heart.

CHAPTER XI

MUCH LINEN

When I left Tenevo I took the same road by which I had come. The sun showed it was already midday. As in the morning, peasants' carts and landowners' britzkas beguiled my hearing by their squeaking and the metallic rumble of their bells. Again, the gardener, Franz, drove past me with his vodka barrel, but this time it was probably full. Again his eyes gave me a sour look, and he touched his cap. His nasty face jarred on me, but this time again the disagreeable impression that the meeting with him had made on me was entirely wiped away by the forester's daughter, Olenka, whose heavy wagonette caught me up.

"Give me a lift!" I called to her.

She nodded gaily to me and stopped her vehicle. I sat down beside her, and the wagonette rattled on along the road which like a light stripe cut through the three versts of the Tenevo forest. For about two minutes we looked at each other in silence.

"What a pretty girl she really is!" thought as I looked at her throat and chubby chin. "If I were told to choose between Nadenka and her, I would choose her. . . . She's more natural, fresher, her nature is broader, bolder. . . . If she fell into good hands, much could be made of her! . . . The other is morose, visionary . . . clever."

Lying at Olenka's feet there were two pieces of linen and several parcels.

"What a number of purchases you have made!" I said. "For what can you want so much linen?"

"That's not all I need!" Olenka replied. "I only bought these among a

he rest. To-day I was a whole hour buying things in the market; to-morrow I must go to make purchases in the town. . . . And then all this must be made up. . . . I say, don't you know any woman who would go out to sew?"

"No, I think not. . . . But why have you to buy so many things? Why have they to be sewn? God knows your family is not large. . . . One, two . . . there, I've counted you all. . . ."

"How queer all you men are! You don't understand anything! Wait till you get married, you yourself will be angry when if after the wedding your wife comes to you all slovenly. I know Pëtr Egorych is not in want of anything. Still, it seems a bit awkward not to appear as a good housewife from the first. . . ."

"What has Pëtr Egorych to do with it?"

"Hm! . . . You are laughing at me, as if you don't know!" Olenka said and blushed slightly.

"Young lady, you are talking in riddles."

"Have you really not heard? Why, I am going to marry Pëtr Egorych!"

"Marry?" I said in astonishment, making big eyes. "What Pëtr Egorych?"

"Oh, good Lord! Urbenin, of course!"

I stared at her blushing and smiling face.

"You? Going to marry . . . Urbenin? What a joke!"

"It's not a joke at all. . . . I really can't understand where you see the joke. . . ."

"You to marry . . . Urbenin . . . . " repeated, getting pale, I really don't know why. "If this is not a joke, what is it?"

"What joke! I can't understand what is there extraordinary—what is there strange in it?" Olenka said, pouting.

A minute passed in silence. . . . I gazed at the pretty girl, at her young, almost childish face, and was astonished that she could make such terrible jokes! I instantly pictured to myself Urbenin, elderly, fat, red-faced with his standing-out ears and hard hands, whose very touch could only scratch that young female body which had scarcely begun to live. . . . Surely the thought of such a picture must frighten this pretty wood fay, who knew how to look poetically at the sky when it is reft by lightning and thunder growls angrily! I, even I, was frightened!

"It's true he's a little old," Olenka sighed, "but he loves me. . . . His love is trustworthy."

"It's not a matter of trustworthy love, but of happiness. . . ."

"I shall be happy with him. . . . He has means, thank God, and he's no pauper, no beggar, but a nobleman. Of course, I'm not in love with him, but are only those who marry for love happy? Oh, I know those marriages for love!"

"My child, when have you had time to stuff your brain with this terrible worldly wisdom?" I asked. "Admitted that you are joking with me, but where have you learned to joke in such a coarse, old way? . . . Where? When?"

Olenka looked at me with astonishment and shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't understand what you are saying," she said. "You don't like to see a young girl marry an old man? Is that so?"

Olenka suddenly blushed all over, her chin moved nervously, and without wait-

ing for my answer she rattled on rapidly.

"This does not please you? Then have the goodness to go into the wood . . . into that dullness, where there is nothing except merlins and a mad father . . . and wait there until a young suitor comes along! It pleased you the other evening, but if you saw it in winter, when one only wishes . . . that death might come——"

"Oh, all this is absurd, Olenka, all this is unripe, silly! If you are not joking. . . . I don't even know what to say! You had better be silent and not offend the air with your tongue. I, in your place, would have hanged myself on seven aspens, and you buy linen . . . and smile. Akh!"

"In any case, he with his means will have father cured," she whispered.

"How much do you require for your father's cure?" I cried. "Take it from me—a hundred? Two hundred? . . . A thousand? Olenka, it's not your father's cure that you want!

The news Olenka had communicated to me had excited me so much, that I had not even noticed that the wagonette had driven past my village, or how it had turned into the Count's yard and stopped at the bailiff's porch. When I saw the children run out, and the smile on Urbenin's face, who also had rushed out to help Olenka down, I jumped out of the wagonette and ran into the Count's house without even taking leave. Here further news awaited me.

CHAPTER XII

MY GLANCE!

"How opportune! How opportune!" the Count cried as he greeted me and scratched my cheek with his long pointed moustache. "You could not have chosen a happier time! We have only just sat down to luncheon. . . . Of course you are acquainted. . . . You have doubtless often had collisions in your legal department. . . . Ha, ha!"

With both hands the Count pointed to two men who, seated in soft armchairs, were partaking of cold tongue. In one I had the vexation of recognizing the Justice of the Peace, Kalinin; the other, a little grey-haired man with a large moonlike bald pate, was my good friend, Babaev, a rich landowner who occupied the post of perpetual member of our district council. Having exchanged bows, I looked with astonishment at Kalinin. I knew how much he disliked the Count and what reports he had set in circulation in the district about the man at whose table he was now eating tongue and green peas with such appetite and drinking ten-year-old liqueur. How could a respectable man explain such a visit? The Justice of the Peace caught my glance and evidently understood it.

"I have devoted this day to visits," he said to me. "I am driving round the whole district. . . . And, as you see, I have also called upon his Excellency . . ."

Il'ya brought a fourth cover. I sat down, drank a glass of vodka, and began to lunch.

"It's wrong, your Excellency, very wrong!" Kalinin said, continuing the conversation my entrance had interrupted. "It's no sin for us little people but you are an illustrious man, a rich man, a brilliant man. . . . It's a sin for you to fail."

"That's quite true; it's a sin," Babaev cquiesced.

"What's it all about?" I asked.

"Nikolai Ignat'ich has given me a ood idea!" the Count said, nodding to ıe justice of the peace. "He came to .e. . . . We sat down to lunch, and I egan complaining of being dull. . . ."

"And he complained to me of being ull," Kalinin interrupted the Count. Dullness, melancholy . . . this and ıat. . . . In a word, disillusionment. sort of Onegin. 'Your Excellency,' I id, 'you're yourself to blame. . . .' Iow so?' 'Quite simply. . . . In order ot to be dull,' I said, 'accept some of- ce . . . occupy yourself with the anagement of your estate. . . . Farm- g is excellent, wonderful. . . .' He tells ıe he intends to occupy himself with rming, but still he is dull. . . . What ils him is, so to speak, the entertain- g, the stimulating element. There is ot the—how am I to express myself? -er—strong sensations. . . ."

"Well, and what idea did you give m?"

"I really suggested no idea, I only re- oached his Excellency. 'How is it our Excellency,' I said, 'that you, a ung, cultivated, brilliant man, can live such seclusion? Is it not a sin?' I ked. 'You go nowhere, you receive body, you are seen nowhere. . . . ou live like an old man, or a hermit. . . What would it cost you to arrange rties . . . so to speak, at homes?' "

"Why should he have at homes?" I ked.

"How can you ask? First, if his Ex- llency gave evening parties, he would come acquainted with society—study so to speak. . . . Secondly, society ould have the honour of becoming more closely acquainted with one of the richest of our landowners. . . . There would be, so to speak, a mutual exchange of thoughts, conversation, gaiety. . . . And when one comes to think of it, how many cultivated young ladies and men we have among us! . . . What musical evenings, dances, picnics could be arranged! Only think! The reception rooms are huge, there are pavilions in the gardens, and so on, and so on. Nobody in the government ever dreamed of the private theatricals or the concerts that could be got up. . . . Yes, by God! Only imagine them! Now all this is lost, is buried in the earth; but then . . . one must only know how to! If I had his Excellency's means, I would show them how to live! And he says: 'Dull'! By God! it's laughable to listen to it. . . . It makes one feel ashamed. . . ."

And Kalinin began to blink with his eyes, wishing to appear to be really ashamed. . . .

"All this is quite just," the Count said, rising from his seat and thrusting his hands into his pockets. "I could give excellent evening parties. . . . Concerts, private theatricals . . . all this could be arranged charmingly. Besides, these parties would not only entertain society, they would have an educational influence too! . . . Don't you think so?"

"Well, yes," I acquiesced. "As soon as our young ladies see your moustachioed physiognomy they will at once be penetrated by the spirit of civilization. . . ."

"Serezha, you're always joking," the Count said, somewhat offended, "and you never give me any friendly advice! Everything is laughable for you! My

friend, it is about time to drop these student habits!"

The Count began to pace about the room from corner to corner, and to explain to me in long and tiresome suppositions the benefits that his evening parties might bring to humanity. Music, literature, the drama, riding, shooting. The shooting alone might unite all the best forces of the district! . . .

"We shall revert to the subject," the Count said to Kalinin in taking leave of him after lunch.

"Then, if I understand your Excellency, the district may hope?" the Justice of the Peace inquired.

"Certainly, certainly. . . . I will develop this idea and see what I can do. . . . I am happy . . . delighted. You can tell everybody. . . ."

It was a sight to note the look of beatitude that was imprinted on the face of the Justice of the Peace as he took his seat in his carriage and said to the coachman: "Go!" He was so delighted that he even forgot our differences and in taking leave he called me "golubchek" and pressed my hand warmly.

After the visitors had left, the Count and I sat down to table again and continued our lunch. We lunched till seven o'clock in the evening, when the crockery was removed from the table and dinner was served. Young drunkards know how to shorten the time between meals. The whole time we drank and ate small pieces, by which means we sustained the appetite which would have failed us if we had entirely ceased to eat.

"Did you send money to anybody today?" I asked the Count, remembering the packets of hundred-rouble notes I had seen in the morning in the Tenevo post office.

"I sent no money."

"Tell me, please, is your—what's his name?—new friend, Kazimir Kaetanych or Kaetan Kazimirovich, a wealthy man?"

"No, Serezha. He's a poor beggar! But what a soul he has—what a heart! You are wrong in speaking so disdainfully of him . . . and you bully him. Brother, you must learn to discriminate between people. Let's have another glass?"

Pshekhotsky returned for dinner. When he saw me sitting at table and drinking, he frowned, and after turning about round our table for a time he seemed to think it best to retire to his own room. He refused to have any dinner, pleading a bad headache, but he expressed no objection when the Count advised him to go to bed and have his dinner there.

During the second course, Urbenin came in. I hardly recognized him. His broad red face beamed all over with pleasure. A happy smile seemed to be playing on his sticking-out ears and on the thick fingers with which he was arranging his smart new necktie all the time.

"One of the cows is ill, your Excellency," he reported. "I sent for the vet., but it appears he had gone away somewhere. Wouldn't it be a good thing to send to town for the veterinary surgeon? If I send to him he will not listen and will not come, but if you write to him it will be quite a different matter. Perhaps it is a mere trifle, but it may be something serious."

"All right, I will write . . ." the Count grumbled.

"I congratulate you, Pëtr Egorych,"

said, rising and stretching out my and to the bailiff.

"On what occasion?" he murmured.

"Why, you are about to get married!"

"Yes, yes, just fancy! He's going to et married!" the Count began, winking t blushing Urbenin. "What do you ink of him? Ha, ha, ha! He was lent, never said a word, and then sudenly—this bombshell. And do you now whom he is going to marry? We essed it that evening! Pëtr Egorych, e settled then that in your scamp of a eart something improper was going on. hen he looked at you and Olenka he aid: 'That fellow's bitten!' Ha, ha! it down and have dinner with us, Pëtr gorych!"

Urbenin sat down carefully and rectfully and made a sign with his eyes Il'ya to bring him a plate of soup. I oured him out a glass of vodka.

"I don't drink, sir," he said.

"Nonsense, you drink more than we ."

"I used to drink, but now I don't," ne bailiff said, smiling. "Now, I mustn't rink. . . . There's no cause. Thank od, everything is settled, satisfactorily verything is arranged, all exactly as my eart had desired, even better than I ould have expected."

"Well, then, to your happiness you an drink this," I said, pouring him out glass of sherry.

"This—why not? I really did drink ard. Now I can confess it to his Exellency. Sometimes from morning to ight. When I rose in the morning I emembered it . . . well, naturally, I ent to the cupboard at once. Now, hank God, I have nothing to drown in odka."

Urbenin drank the glass of sherry. I poured out a second. He drank this one too, and imperceptibly got drunk. . . .

"I can scarcely believe it," he said, laughing a happy childish laugh. "I look at this ring and remember her words when she gave her consent—I can still scarcely believe it. . . . It seems laughable. . . . How could I, at my age, with my appearance, hope that this deserving girl would not disdain to become mine . . . the mother of my orphan children? Why, she's a beauty, as you have been pleased to notice; an angel incorporate! Wonders without end! You have filled my glass again? Why not, for the last time. . . . I drank to drown care, I will now drink to happiness. How I suffered, gentlemen! What grief I endured! I saw her first a year ago, and would you believe it—from that time I have not slept quietly a single night; there was not a single day on which I did not drown this—silly weakness with vodka . . . and scolded myself for this folly. . . . I sometimes looked at her through the window and admired her and . . . tore out the hair of my head. . . . At times I could have hanged myself . . . But, thank God, I ventured and proposed, and, do you know, it took me quite by surprise. Ha, ha! I heard, but I could not believe mine own ears. She said: 'I agree,' and it appeared to me like: 'Go to the devil, you old dotard!' . . . Afterward, when she kissed me, I was convinced. . . ."

At the recollection of that first kiss received from poetical Olenka, Urbenin closed his eyes and, despite his fifty years, he blushed like a boy. . . . this appeared disgusting to me.

"Gentlemen," he said, looking at us with happy, kind eyes, "why don't you

get married? Why are you wasting your lives, throwing them out of the window? Why do you shun that which is the greatest blessing of all who live upon the earth? The delight that debauchery gives is not a hundredth part of what a quiet family life would give you! Young men, your Excellency and you, Sergei Petrovich . . . I am happy now, and . . . God knows how I love you both! Forgive me for giving stupid advice but . . . I want you both to be happy! Why don't you get married? Family life is a blessing. . . . It's every man's duty! . . ."

The happy and fond look on the face of the old man, who was about to marry a young girl and was advising us to alter our dissolute existence for a quiet family life, became unbearable to me.

"Yes," I said, "family life is a duty. I agree with you. And therefore you are acquitting yourself of this duty for the second time?"

"Yes, for the second time. I am fond of family life in general. To be a bachelor or a widower is only half a life for me. Whatever you may say, gentlemen, wedlock is a great thing!"

"Certainly . . . even when the husband is almost three times as old as his wife?"

Urbenin blushed. The hand that was lifting a spoonful of soup to his mouth trembled, and the soup was pouring again into the plate.

"I understand what you want to say, Sergei Petrovich," he mumbled. "I thank you for your frankness. I ask myself: Is it not mean? I suffer! But where has one time to question oneself, to settle various questions when every moment one feels happy, when one forget one's age, ugliness . . . the whole homo sum, Sergei Petrovich! And when for a second, thoughts run through my pate of the inequality of years, I don't break my head for an answer, but calm myself as well as I can. I think I have made Olga happy. I have given her father and my children a mother. Besides, all this is like a novel, and . . my head feels giddy. It was wrong to make me drink sherry."

Urbenin rose, wiped his face with his napkin, and sat down again. A minute later he gulped down another glass of sherry and looked at me for a long time with an imploring glance as if he were begging me for mercy, and suddenly his shoulders began to shake, and quite unexpectedly he burst into sobs like a boy.

"It's nothing . . . nothing!" he mumbled, trying to master his sobs. "Don't be uneasy. After your words my heart grew sick with a strange foreboding. But it is nothing."

Urbenin's foreboding was realized realized so soon that I have not time to change my pen and begin a new page. From the next chapter my calm muse will change the expression of calmness on her face for one of passion and affliction. The introduction is finished and the drama begins.

The criminal will of man enters upon its rights.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LITTLE DEVIL

I REMEMBER a fine Sunday morning. Through the windows of the Count's church the diaphanous blue sky could be seen and the whole of the church from its painted cupola to its floor, was flooded by soft sunrays in which little clouds of incense played about gaily

. . The songs of swallows and star-
ngs were borne in through the open
ors and windows. . . . One sparrow,
idently a very bold little fellow, flew
at the door, and having circled, chirp-
g, several times round and round above
ır heads, flew out again through one
the windows. . . . In the church
elf there was also singing. . . . They
ng sweetly, with feeling, and with the
thusiasm for which our Little Russian
ngers are so celebrated when they feel
emselves the heroes of the moment,
d that all eyes are bent upon them.
. . The melodies were all gay and
ayful, like the soft, bright sunspots
at played upon the walls and the
thes of the congregation. . . . In
e unschooled but soft and fresh notes
the tenor my ear seemed to catch,
spite the gay wedding melodies, deep,
elancholy, chest chords. It appeared
if this tenor was sorry to see that next
young, pretty and poetical Olenka
ere stood Urbenin, heavy, bear-like,
d getting on in years. . . . And it
as not only the tenor who was sorry to
e this ill-assorted pair. . . . On many
the faces that lay within the field of
y vision, notwithstanding all their ef-
rts to appear gay and unconcerned,
en an idiot could have read an expres-
n of compassion.

Arrayed in a new dress suit, I stood
hind Olenka, holding the crown over
r head. I was pale and felt unwell.
. . I had a racking headache, the re-
lt of the previous night's carouse and
pleasure party on the lake and the
ıole time I was looking to see if the
nd that held the crown did not trem-
e. . . . My soul felt the disagreeable
esentiment of dread that is felt in a
rest on a rainy autumn night. I was
vexed, disgusted, sorry. . . . Cats
seemed to be scratching at my heart,
somewhat resembling qualms of con-
science. . . . There in the depths of the
very bottom of my heart, a little devil
was seated who obstinately, persistently
whispered to me that if Olenka's mar-
riage with clumsy Urbenin was a sin, I
was the cause of that sin. . . . Where
did such thoughts come from? How
could I have saved this little fool from
the unknown risks of her indubitable
mistake? . . .

"Who knows?" whispered the little
devil. "Who should know better than
you?"

In my time I have known many ill-
assorted marriages. I have often stood
before Pukirev's picture. I have read
numberless novels based on disagree-
ments between husband and wife; be-
sides, I have known the physiology that
irrevocably punishes ill-assorted mar-
riages, but never once in my whole life
had I experienced that terrible spiritual
condition from which I was unable to
escape all the time I was standing be-
hind Olenka, executing the functions of
best man.

"If my soul is agitated only by com-
miseration, how is it that I never felt
that compassion before when I assisted
at other weddings? . . ."

"There is no commiseration here,"
the little devil whispered, "but jeal-
ousy. . . ."

One can only be jealous of those one
loves, but do I love the girl in red? If I
loved all the girls I have met while liv-
ing under the moon, my heart would not
suffice; besides, it would be too much of
a good thing. . . .

My friend Count Karnéev was stand-
ing quite at the back near the door be-

hind the churchwarden's counter, selling wax tapers. He was well groomed, with well smoothed hair, and exhaled a narcotic, suffocating odour of scents. That day he looked such a darling that when I greeted him in the morning I could not refrain from saying:

"Alexey, to-day you are looking like an ideal quadrille dancer!"

He greeted everybody who entered or left with the sweetest of smiles, and I heard the ponderous compliments with which he rewarded each lady who bought a candle from him. He, the spoilt child of Fortune, who never had copper coins, did not know how to handle them, and was constantly dropping on the floor five and three-kopeck pieces. Near him, leaning against the counter, Kalinin stood majestically with a Stanislav decoration on a ribbon round his neck. His countenance shone and beamed. He was pleased that his idea of "at homes" had fallen on good soil, and was already beginning to bear fruit. In the depths of his soul he was showering on Urbenin a thousand thanks; his marriage was an absurdity, but it was a good opportunity to get the first "at home" arranged.

Vain Olenka must have rejoiced. . . . From the nuptial lectern to the doors of the high altar stretched out two rows of the most representative ladies of our district flower garden. The guests were decked out as smartly as they would have been if the Count himself was being married: more elegant toilets could not have been desired. . . . The assembly consisted almost exclusively of aristocrats . . . Not a single priest's wife, not a single tradesman's wife. . . . There were even among them ladies to whom Olenka would formerly never have considered herself entitled to bow. . . . And Olenka's bridegroom—a bailiff, a privileged retainer; but from this her vanity could not suffer. He was a nobleman and the possessor of a mortgaged estate in the neighbouring district. . . . His father had been marshal of the district and he himself had for more than nine years been a magistrate in his own native district. . . . What more could have been desired by the ambitious daughter of a personal nobleman? Even the fact that her best man was known in the whole province as a *bon vivant* and a Don Juan could tickle her pride. . . . . All the women were looking at him. . . . He was as showy as forty thousand best men thrown into one, and what was not the least important, he had not refused to be her best man, she, a simple little girl, when, as everybody knew, he had even refused aristocrats when they had asked him to be their best man. . . .

But vain Olenka did not rejoice. . . . She was as pale as the linen she had but lately brought home from the Tenevy market. The hand in which she held the candle shook slightly and her chin trembled from time to time. In her eyes there was a certain dullness, as if something had suddenly astonished or frightened her. . . . There was not a sign of that gaiety which had shone in her eyes even the day before when she was running about the garden talking with enthusiasm of the sort of wallpaper she would have in her drawing-room, and saying on what days she would receive guests, and so on. Her face was now too serious, more serious than the solemn occasion demanded. . . .

Urbenin was in a new dress-suit. He was respectably dressed, but his hair was arranged as the orthodox Russian

ore their hair in the year 'twelve. As sual, he was red in the face, and serious. is eyes prayed and the signs of the ross he made after every "Lord have ercy upon us" were not made in a echanical manner.

Urbenin's children by his first marage—the schoolboy Grisha and the litle fair-haired girl Sasha,—were standng just behind me. They gazed at the ack of their father's red head and at is standing-out ears, and their faces eemed to represent notes of interrogaon. They could not understand why unt Olia had given herself to their ather, and why he was taking her into is house. Sasha was only surprised, but he fourteen-year-old Grisha frowned nd looked scowlingly at him. He would ertainly have replied in the negative if is father had asked his permission to arry. . . .

The marriage service was performed ith special solemnity. Three priests nd two deacons officiated. The service sted long, so long, indeed, that my m was quite tired of holding the crown, nd the ladies who love to see a weding ceased looking at the bridal pair. he chief priest read the prayers, with auses, without leaving out a single one. he choir sang something very long and omplicated; the cantor took advantage f the occasion to display the compass f his voice, reading the Gospels with xtra slowness. But at last the chief riest took the crown out of my hands . . . the young couple kissed each other. . . . The guests got excited, the straight nes were broken, congratulations, kisses nd exclamations were heard. Urbenin, eaming and smiling, took his young ife on his arm, and we all went out into e air.

If anybody who was in the church with me finds this description incomplete and not quite accurate, let him set down these oversights to the headache from which I was suffering and the abovementioned spiritual depression which prevented me from observing and noting. . . . Certainly, if I had known at the time that I would have to write a novel, I would not have looked at the floor as I did on that day, and I would not have paid attention to my headache!

Fate sometimes allows itself bitter and malignant jokes! The young couple had scarcely had time to leave the church when they were met by an unexpected and unwished for surprise. When the wedding procession, bright with many tints and colours in the sunlight, was proceeding from the church to the Count's house, Olenka suddenly made a backward step, stopped, and gave her husband's elbow such a violent pull that he staggered.

"He's been let out!" she said aloud, looking at me with terror.

Poor little thing! Her insane father, the forester Skvortsov, was running down the avenue to meet the procession. Waving his hands and stumbling along with rolling, insane eyes, he presented a most unattractive picture. However, all this would possibly have been decent if he had not been in his print dressing-gown and downtrodden slippers, the raggedness of which was of ill accord with the elegant wedding finery of his daughter. His face looked sleepy, his dishevelled hair was blown about by the wind, his nightshirt was unbuttoned.

"Olenka!" he mumbled when he had

come up to them. "Why have you left me?"

Olenka blushed scarlet and looked askance at the smiling ladies. The poor little thing was consumed by shame.

"Mit'ka did not lock the door!" the forester continued, turning to us. "It would not be difficult for robbers to get in! . . . The samovar was stolen out of the kitchen last summer, and now she wants us to be robbed again."

"I don't know who can have let him out!" Urbenin whispered to me. "I ordered him to be locked up. . . . Golubchik, Sergei Petrovich, have pity on us; get us out of this awkward position somehow! Anyhow!"

"I know who stole your samovar," I said to the forester. "Come along, I'll show you where it is."

Taking Skvortsov round the waist, I led him towards the church. I took him into the churchyard and talked to him until, by my calculation, I thought the wedding procession ought to be in the house, then I left him without having told him where his stolen samovar was to be found.

Although this meeting with the madman was quite unexpected and extraordinary, it was soon forgotten. . . . A new surprise that Fate had prepared for the young couple was still more unusual.

CHAPTER XIV

A COLD KISS

An hour later we were all seated at long tables, dining.

To anybody who was accustomed to cobwebs, mildew and wild gipsy whoops in the Count's apartments it must have seemed strange to look on the workaday, prosaical crowd that now, by their habitual chatter, broke the usual silence of the ancient and deserted halls. This many coloured noisy throng looked like a flight of starlings which in flying past had alighted to rest in a neglected churchyard or—may the noble bird forgive me such a comparison!—a flight of storks that in the twilight of one of their migratory days has settled down on the ruins of a deserted castle.

I sat there hating that crowd which frivolously examined the decaying wealth of the Counts Karnéev. The mosaic walls, the carved ceilings, the rich Persian carpets and the rococo furniture excited enthusiasm and astonishment. A self-satisfied smile never left the Count's moustachioed face. He received the enthusiastic flattery of his guests as something that he deserved, though in reality all the riches and luxuries of his deserted mansion were not acquired in any way thanks to him, but on the contrary he merited the bitterest reproaches and contempt for the barbarously dull indifference with which he treated all the wealth, that had been collected by his fathers and grandfathers, collected not in days, but in scores of years! It was only the mentally blind or the poor of spirit who could not see in every slab of damp marble, in every picture in each dark corner of the Count's garden, the sweat, the tears and the callosities on the hands of the people whose children now swarmed in the little log huts of the Count's miserable village. . . . Among all those people seated at the wedding feast, rich, independent people, people who might easily have

ld him the plainest truths, there was ot one who would have told the Count at his self-satisfied grin was stupid nd out of place. . . . Everybody und it necessary to smile flatteringly d to burn paltry incense before him. this was ordinary politeness (with , many love to throw everything on oliteness and propriety), I would pre- r the churl who eats with his hands, ho takes the bread from his neigh- our's plate, and blows his nose between o fingers, to these dandies.

Urbenin smiled, but he had his own asons for this. He smiled flatteringly, spectfully, and in a childlike, happy anner. His broad smiles were the sult of a sort of dog's happiness. A voted and loving dog, who had been ndled and petted, and now in sign gratitude wagged its tail gaily and th sincerity.

Like Risler Senior in Alphonse Dau- t's novel, beaming and rubbing his nds with delight, he gazed at his ung wife, and from the superabun- nce of his feelings could not refrain om asking question after question:

"Who could have thought that this ung beauty would fall in love with old man like myself? Is it possible e could not find anybody younger d more elegant? Women's hearts e incomprehensible!"

He even had the courage to turn to e and blurt out:

"When one looks around, what an e this is we live in! He, he! When old man can carry off such a fairy om under the nose of youth! Where ve you all had your eyes? He, he. . . Young men are not what they d to be!"

Not knowing what to do or how to express the feelings of gratitude that were overflowing in this broad breast, he was constantly jumping up, stretching out his glass towards the Count's glass and saying in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"Your Excellency, my feelings toward you are well known. This day you have done so much for me that my affection for you appears like nothing. How have I merited such a great favour, your Excellency, or that you should take such an interest in my joy? It is only Counts and bankers who celebrate their weddings in such a way! What luxury, what an assembly of notable guests! . . . Oh, what can I say! . . . Believe me, your Excellency, I shall never forget you, as I shall never forget this best and happiest day of my life."

And so on. . . . Olenka was evidently not pleased with her husband's florid respectfulness. One could see she was annoyed at his speeches, that raised smiles on the faces of the guests and even caused them to feel ashamed for him. Notwithstanding the glass of champagne she had drunk, she was still not gay, and morose as before. . . . She was as pale as she had been in church, and the same look of dread was in her eyes. . . . She was silent, she answered lazily to all the questions that were asked, scarcely smiled at the Count's witticisms, and she hardly touched the expensive dishes. . . . In proportion as Urbenin became slightly intoxicated and thought himself the happiest of mortals, her pretty face appeared more and more unhappy. It made me sorrowful to look at her, and in order not to look at her face I tried not to lift my eyes off my plate.

How could her sadness be explained? Was not regret beginning to gnaw at the poor girl's heart? Or perhaps her vanity had expected even greater pomp?

During the second course when I lifted my eyes and looked at her, I was painfully struck by her expression. The poor girl in trying to answer some of the Count's silly remarks, was making strenuous efforts to swallow something; sobs were welling in her throat. She did not remove her handkerchief from her mouth, and looked at us timidly, like a frightened little animal, to see if we did not notice that she wanted to cry.

"Why are you looking so glum today?" the Count asked. "Oh, ho! Pëtr Egorych, it's your fault! Have the goodness to cheer your wife up! Ladies and gentlemen, I demand a kiss! Ha, ha! . . . The kiss I demand is, of course, not for me, but only . . . that they should kiss each other! Bitter!"

"Bitter!" echoed Kalinin.

Urbenin, smiling all over his red face, rose and began to blink. Olenka forced by the calls and the demands of the guests, rose slightly and offered her motionless, lifeless lips to Urbenin. He kissed her. . . . Olenka pressed her lips together as if she feared they would be kissed another time, and glanced at me. . . . Probably my look was an evil one. Catching my eye, she suddenly blushed, and taking up her handkerchief, she began to blow her nose, trying in that way to hide her terrible confusion. . . . The thought entered my mind that she was ashamed before me, ashamed of that kiss, ashamed of her marriage.

"What have I to do with you?" I thought, but at the same time I did not remove my eyes from her face, trying to discover the cause of her confusion.

The poor little thing could not stand my gaze. It is true the blush of shame soon left her face, but in place of it tears began to rise up in her eyes, real tears such as I had never before seen on her face. Pressing her handkerchief to her face, she rose and rushed out of the dining-room.

"Olga Nikolaevna has a bad headache," I hastened to say in order to explain her departure. "Already this morning she complained of her head . . ."

"Not at all, brother," the Count said jokingly. "A headache has nothing to do with it. It's all caused by the kiss; it has confused her. Ladies and gentlemen, I announce a severe reprimand for the bridegroom! He has not taught his bride how to kiss! Ha, ha, ha!"

The guests, delighted with the Count's wit, began to laugh. . . . But they ought not to have laughed. . . .

Five minutes passed, ten minutes passed, and the bride did not return . . . A silence fell on the party. . . . Even the Count ceased joking. . . . Olenka's absence was all the more striking as she had left suddenly without saying a word. . . . To say nothing about etiquette, which had received a shock first of all, Olenka had left the table immediately after the kiss, so it was evident she was cross at having been forced to kiss her husband. . . . It was impossible to suppose she had gone away because she was confused. . . . One can be confused for a minute, for two, but not for an eternity as the first ten minutes of her absence

appeared to us all. What a number of evil thoughts entered into the half tipsy minds of the men, what scandals were being prepared by the charming ladies! The bride had risen and left the table! What an effective and scenic point for a drama in the provincial "fashionable world"!

Urbenin began to be uneasy and looked round.

"Nerves. . . ." he muttered. "Or perhaps something has gone wrong with her toilet. . . . Who can account for anything with these women? She'll come back directly—this very minute."

But when another ten minutes had passed and she had not appeared, he looked at me with such unhappy, imploring eyes that I was sorry for him.

"Would it matter if I went to look for her?" his eyes asked. "Won't you help me, golubchik, to get out of this horrible position? Of all here you are the cleverest, the boldest, the most ready-witted man. Do help me!"

I saw the entreaty in his unhappy eyes and decided to help him. How I helped him the reader will see further on. . . . I will only say that the bear who assisted the hermit in Krylov's fable loses all its animal majesty, becomes pale, and turns into an innocent infusoria when I think of myself in the part of the "obliging fool." . . The resemblance between me and the bear consists only in this that we both went to help quite sincerely without foreseeing any bad consequences from our help, but the difference between us is enormous. . . . The stone with which I struck Urbenin's forehead was many times more weighty.

"Where is Olga Nikolaevna?" I asked the lackey who had brought round the salad.

"She went into the garden, sir," he replied.

"This is becoming quite impossible, mesdames!" I said in a jocular tone, addressing myself to the ladies. "The bride has gone away and my wine has become quite sour! . . . I must go to look for her and bring her back, even if all her teeth were aching! The best man is an official personage, and he is going to show his authority!"

I rose, amid the loud applause of my friend the Count, left the dining-room and went into the garden. The hot rays of the midday sun poured straight upon my head, which was already excited by wine. Suffocating heat and sultriness seemed to strike me in the face. I went along one of the side avenues at a venture, and, whistling some sort of melody, I gave full scope to my capacities as an ordinary detective. I examined all the bushes, summerhouses and caves, and when I began to be tormented by the regret that I had turned to the right instead of to the left, I suddenly heard a strange sound. Somebody was laughing or crying. The sounds issued from one of the grottoes that I had left to examine last of all. Quickly entering it, I found the object of my search enveloped in dampness, the smell of mildew, mushrooms, and lime.

She stood there leaning against a wooden column that was covered with black moss, and lifting her eyes full of horror and despair on me, she tore at her hair. Tears poured from her eyes as from a sponge that is pressed.

"What have I done? What have I done?" she muttered.

"Yes, Olia, what have you done?" I said, standing before her with folded arms.

"Why did I marry him? Where were my eyes? Where was my sense?"

"Yes, Olia. . . . It is difficult to explain your action. To explain it by inexperience is too indulgent; to explain it by depravity—I would rather not. . . ."

"I only understood it to-day . . . only to-day! Why did I not understand it yesterday? Now all is irrevocable, all is lost! All, all! I might have married the man I love, the man who loves me!"

"Who is that, Olia?" I asked.

"You!" she said, looking me straight and openly in the eyes. "But I was too hasty! I was foolish! You are clever, noble, young. . . . You are rich! You appeared to me unattainable!"

"Well, that's enough, Olia," I said, taking her by the hand. "Wipe your little eyes and come along. . . . They are waiting for you there. . . . Well, don't cry any more, don't cry. . . ." I kissed her hand. . . . "That's enough, little girl! You have done a foolish thing and are now paying for it. . . . It was your fault. . . . Well, that's enough, be calm. . . ."

"But you love me? Yes? You are so big, so handsome! Don't you love me?"

"It's time to go, my darling. . . ." I said, noticing to my great horror that I was kissing her forehead, taking her round the waist, that she was scorching me with her hot breath and that she was hanging round my neck.

"Enough!" I mumbled. "That must satisfy you!"

Five minutes later, when I carried her out of the grotto in my arms and troubled by new impressions put her on her feet, I saw Pshekhotsky standing almost at the entrance. . . . He stood there, looking at me maliciously and applauding silently. . . . I measured him with my glance, and giving Olga my arm, walked off towards the house.

"We'll see the last of you here to-day," I said, looking back at Pshekhotsky. "You will have to pay for this spying!"

My kisses had probably been ardent because Olga's face was burning as if ablaze. There were no traces of the recently shed tears to be seen on it.

"Now, as the saying is, the ocean is but knee-deep for me," she murmured as we went together towards the house and she pressed my elbow convulsively. "This morning I did not know where to hide myself from terror, and now . . . now, my good giant, I don't know what to do from happiness! My husband is sitting and waiting for me there. . . . Ha, ha! . . . What's that to me? If he were even a crocodile, a terrible serpent . . . I'm afraid of nothing! I love you, and that's all I want to know!"

I looked at her face, radiant with happiness, at her eyes, brim full of joyful, satisfied love, and my heart sank with fear for the future of this pretty and happy creature: her love for me was but an extra impulse towards the abyss. . . . How will this laughing woman with no thought for the future end? . . . My heart misgave me and sank with a feeling that cannot be called either pity or sympathy, because it was

stronger than these feelings. I stopped and laid my hand on Olga's shoulder. . . . I had never before seen anything more beautiful, graceful and at the same time more pitiful. . . . There was no time for reasoning, deliberation or thought, and, carried away by my feeling, I exclaimed:

"Olga, come home with me at once! This instant!"

"How? What did you say?" she asked, unable to understand my somewhat solemn tone.

"Let us drive to my house immediately!"

Olga smiled and pointed to the house. . . .

"Well, and what of that?" I said. "Isn't it all the same if I take you to-morrow or to-day? But the sooner the better. . . . Come!"

"But . . . that's somehow strange——"

"Girl, you're afraid of the scandal? Yes, there'll be an unusual, a grandiose scandal, but a thousand scandals are better than that you should remain here! I won't leave you here! I can't leave you here! Olga, do you understand? Cast aside your faint-heartedness, your womanly logic, and obey me! Obey me if you do not desire your own ruin!"

Olga's eyes said that she did not understand me. . . . Meanwhile time did not stop but went its course, and it was impossible for us to remain standing in the avenue while they were expecting us *there*. We had to decide. . . . I pressed to my heart "the girl in red," who actually was my wife now, and at that moment it appeared to me that I really loved her. . . . loved her with a husband's love, that she was mine, and that her fate rested on my conscience. . . . I saw that I was united with this creature for ever, irrevocably.

"Listen, my darling, my treasure!" I said. "It's a bold step. . . . It will separate us from our nearest friends; it will call down upon our heads a thousand reproaches and tearful lamentations. Perhaps it will even spoil my career; it will cause me a thousand unsurmountable unpleasantnesses, but, my darling, it is settled! You will be my wife! . . . I want no better wife. God preserve me from all other women! I will make you happy; I will take care of you like the apple of my eye, as long as I live; I will educate you—make a woman of you! I promise you this, and here is my honest hand on it!"

I spoke with sincere passion, with feeling, like a stage lover acting the most pathetic scene of his part. I spoke very well, I seemed to be inspired by the touch of an eagle's wing that was soaring over our heads. My Olia took my outstretched hand, held it in her own small hands, and kissed it tenderly. But this was not a sign of assent. On the silly little face of an inexperienced woman who had never before heard such speech, there appeared a look of perplexity. . . . She still could not understand me.

"You say I am to go to you?" she said reflectively. "I don't quite understand you. . . . Don't you know what *he* would say?"

"What have you to do with what he would say?"

"How so? No, Serezha! Better say no more. . . . Please leave that alone. . . . You love me, and I want nothing more. With your love I'm ready to go to hell."

"But, little fool, how will you manage it?"

"I shall live here, and you—why you will come every day. . . . I will come to meet you."

"But I can't imagine such a life for you without a shudder! At night—he; in the day—I. . . . No, that is impossible! Olia, I love you so much at the present moment that . . . I am madly jealous. . . . I never suspected I had the capacity for such feelings."

But what imprudence! I had my arm round her waist, and she was stroking my hand tenderly at the time when at any moment one could expect somebody would be passing down the avenue and might see us.

"Come," I said, removing my arm. "Put on your cloak and let us be off!"

"How quickly you want to do things," she murmured in a tearful voice. "You hurry as if to a fire. And God only knows what you have invented! To run away immediately after the marriage! What will people say?"

And Olenka shrugged her shoulders. Her face wore such a look of perplexity, astonishment and incomprehension that I only waved my hand and postponed settling her "life questions" to another moment. Besides, there was no time to continue our conversation: we were going up the stone stairs that led to the terrace and heard the sound of voices. At the dining-room door Olia arranged her hair, saw that her dress was in order, and went into the room. No signs of confusion could be noticed on her face. She entered the room much more boldly than I had expected.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have brought back the fugitive," I said as I sat down in my place. "I found her with difficulty. . . . I'm quite tired out by this search. I went into the garden, I looked around, and there she was walking about in the avenue. . . . 'Why are you here?' I asked her. 'Just so,' she answered. 'It's so stuffy.'"

Olia looked at me, at the guests, at her husband, and began to laugh. Something amused her, and she became gay. I read on her face the wish to share with all that crowd of diners the sudden happiness that she had experienced; and not being able to give expression to it in words, she poured it out in her laughter.

"What a funny person I am!" she said. "I am laughing, and I don't know why I am laughing. . . . Count, laugh!"

"Bitter," cried Balinin.

Urbenin coughed and looked inquiringly at Olia.

"Well?" she said, with a momentary frown.

"They are calling out 'bitter,'" Urbenin smiled, and rising, he wiped his lips with his napkin.

Olga rose too and allowed him to kiss her immovable lips. . . . The kiss was a cold one, but it served to increase the fire that was smouldering in my breast and threatened every moment to burst into flame. . . . I turned away and with compressed lips awaited the end of the dinner. . . . Fortunately the end was soon reached, otherwise I would not have been able to endure it.

CHAPTER XV

HER QUESTION

"Come here!" I said to the Count rudely, going up to him after dinner.

The Count looked at me with astonishment and followed me into the empty room to which I led him.

"What do you want, my dear friend?" he asked as he unbuttoned his waistcoat and hiccuped.

"Choose one of us. . . ." I said, scarcely able to stand on my feet from the rage that mastered me. "Either me or Pshekhotsky! If you don't promise me that in an hour that scoundrel shall leave your estate, I will never set my foot here again! . . . I give you half a minute to make your choice!"

The Count dropped the cigar out of his mouth and spread his arms. . . .

"What's the matter with you, Serezha?" he asked, opening his eyes wide. "You look quite wild!"

"No useless words, if you please! I cannot endure that spy, scoundrel, rogue, your friend Pshekhotsky, and in the name of our close friendship I demand that he shall no longer be here, and instantly, too!"

"But what has he done to you?" the Count asked, much agitated. "Why are you attacking him?"

"I ask you again: me or him?"

"But, golubchik, you are placing me in a horribly awkward position. . . . Stop! There's a feather on your dress coat! . . . You are demanding the impossible from me!"

"Good-bye!" I said. "I am no longer acquainted with you."

And turning sharply on my heel, I went into the ante-room, put on my overcoat and hastened out of the house. When crossing the garden towards the servants' department, where I wanted to give the order to have my horse put to, I was stopped. Coming towards me with a small cup of coffee in her hand, I was met by Nadia Kalinin. She was also at Urbenin's wedding, but a sort of undefined fear had forced me to avoid speaking to her, and during the whole day I had not gone up to her, nor said a word to her.

"Sergey Petrovich!" she said in an unnaturally deep voice when in passing her I slightly raised my hat. "Stop!"

"What may your commands be?" I asked, as I came up to her.

"I have nothing to command. . . . Besides, you are no lackey," she said, gazing straight into my eyes and becoming terribly pale. "You are hurrying somewhere, but if you have time might I detain you for a moment?"

"Certainly! . . . I can't understand why you ask it? . . ."

"In that case let us sit down. . . . Sergey Petrovich," she continued, after we had seated ourselves. "All this day you have tried to avoid seeing me, and have gone round me, as if you were afraid of meeting me and as if on purpose, I had decided to speak to you. . . . I am proud and egoistical. . . . I do not know how to obtrude myself, . . . but once in a lifetime one can sacrifice pride."

"To what do you refer?"

"I had decided to ask you. . . . The question is humiliating, it is difficult for me. . . . I don't know how I shall stand it. . . . Answer me without looking at me. . . . Sergey Petrovich, is it possible you are not sorry for me?"

Nadia looked at me and slightly shook her head. Her face became paler. Her upper lip trembled and was drawn to one side.

"Sergey Petrovich! I always think that . . . you have been separated from me by some misunderstanding, some caprice. . . . I think if we had an explanation, all would go on as formerly. If I did not think it, I would not have strength to put you the question you are about to hear. Sergey Petrovich, I am unhappy. . . . You must see it. . . . My life is no life. . . . All is dried up. . . . And chiefly . . . this uncertainty . . . one does not know, whether to hope or not. . . . Your conduct towards me is so incomprehensible that it is impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion. . . . Tell me, and I shall know what to do. . . . My life will then have an aim. . . . I shall then decide on something.

"Nadezhda Nikolaevna, you wish to ask me about something?" I said, preparing in my mind an answer to the question I had a presentiment was coming.

"Yes, I want to ask. . . . The question is humiliating. . . . If anybody were listening to us they might think I was obtruding myself, in a word,—was a sort of Pushkin's Tatiana. . . . But this question has been tortured from me. . . ."

The question was really forced from her by torture. When Nadia turned her face towards me to put that question, I became frightened: Nadia trembled, pressed her fingers together convulsively, and pressed from her lips with melancholy sadness the fatal words. Her pallor was terrible.

"May I hope?" she whispered at last. "Do not be afraid to tell me candidly. . . . Whatever the answer may be, it will be better than uncertainty. What is it? May I hope?"

She waited for an answer, meanwhile the state of my soul was such that I was incapable of making a sensible answer. Drunk, excited by the occurrence in the grotto, enraged by Pshekhotsky's spying, and Olga's indecision, and the stupid conversation I had had with the Count, I scarcely heard Nadia.

"May I hope?" she repeated. "Answer me!"

"Ach, I can't answer now, Nadezhda Nikolaevna!" I said with a wave of the hand as I rose. "I am incapable at the present moment of giving you any sort of answer. Forgive me, I neither heard nor understood you. I am stupid and excited. . . . It's really a pity you took the trouble."

I again waved my hand and left Nadia. It was only afterwards when I became calm again, that I understood how stupid and cruel I had been in not giving the girl an answer to her simple and ingenuous question. Why did I not answer her?

Now when I can look back dispassionately at the past, I do not explain my cruelty by the condition of my soul. It appears to me that in not giving a straightforward answer I was coquetting and playing the fool. It is difficult to understand the human soul, but it is still more difficult to understand one's own soul. If I really was playing the fool, may God forgive me Although to make game of another's suffering ought not to be forgiven.

CHAPTER XVI

A MISTAKE IN MARRYING

For three days I wandered about my rooms from corner to corner like a wolf in a cage, trying with all the strength of my unstable will to prevent myself from leaving the house. I did not touch the pile of papers that were lying on the table patiently awaiting my attention; I received nobody; I quarrelled with Polycarp; I was irritable. . . . I did not allow myself to go to the Count's estate, and this obstinacy cost me great nervous labour. A thousand times I took up my hat and as often threw it down again. . . . Sometimes I decided to defy the whole world and go to Olga, whatever it might cost; at others I drenched myself with the cold decision to remain at home. . . .

My reason told me not to go to the Count's estate. Since I had sworn to the Count never to set foot in his house again, could I sacrifice my self-love and pride? What would that moustachioed coxcomb think if, after our stupid conversation, I went to him as if nothing had happened? Would it not be a confession of my own injustice?

Besides, as an honest man I ought to break off all connexion with Olga. All further intercourse with her could only lead to her ruin. She had made a mistake in marrying Urbenin; in falling in love with me she had made another mistake. If she had a secret lover while living with her old husband, would she not be like a depraved doll? To say nothing about how abominable in principle, such a life is, it was necessary also to think of the consequences.

What a coward I am! I was afraid of the consequences, of the present, of the past. . . . An ordinary man will laugh at my reasoning. He would not have paced from corner to corner, he would not have seized his head in both hands, he would not have made all sorts of plans, but he would have left all to life which grinds into flour even millstones. Life would have digested everything without asking for his aid or permission. . . . But I am fearsome almost to cowardice. Pacing from corner to corner, I suffered from compassion for Olga, and at the same time I feared she would understand the proposal I had made her in a moment of passion, and would appear in my house to stay as I had promised her, *for ever*. What would have happened if she had listened to me and had come home with me? How long would that *for ever* have lasted, and what would life with me have given poor Olga? I would not have given her family life and would consequently not have given her happiness. No, I ought not to go to Olga!

At the same time my soul was drawn frantically towards her. I was as melancholy as a boy, in love for the first time, who is refused a rendezvous. Tempted by what had occurred in the grotto, I yearned for another meeting, and the alluring vision of Olga, who, as I well knew, was also expecting me, and was pining away from longing, never left my mind for a moment.

The Count sent me letter after letter, each one more rueful and humiliating than the last. . . . He implored me to "forget everything" and come to him; he apologized for Pshekhotsky, he begged me to forgive that "kind, simple, but somewhat shallow man," he was surprised that owing to trifles I had decided to break off old and friendly con-

nexions. In one of his last letters he promised to come to me and, if I wished it, to bring Pshekhotsky with him, who would ask my pardon, "although he did not feel that he was at all in fault." I read the letters and in answer begged each messenger to leave me in peace. I knew well how to be capricious!

At the very height of my nervous agitation, when I, standing at the window, was deciding to go away somewhere—anywhere except to the Count's estate—when I was tormenting myself with arguments, self-reproaches, and visions of love that awaited me with Olga, my door opened quietly, I heard light footsteps behind me, and soon my neck was encircled by two pretty little arms.

"Olga, is that you?" I asked and looked round.

I recognized her by her hot breath, by the manner in which she hung on my neck, and even by her scent. Pressing her head to my cheek, she appeared to me extraordinarily happy. . . . From happiness she could not say a word. . . . I pressed her to my breast and—where had the melancholy, and all the questions with which I had been tormenting myself during the whole of three days, disappeared? I laughed and jumped about with joy like the veriest schoolboy.

Olga was in a blue silk dress, which suited her pale face and splendid flaxen hair very well. The dress was in the latest fashion and must have been very expensive. It probably cost Urbenin a quarter of his yearly salary.

"How lovely you are to-day!" I said, lifting Olga up in my arms and kissing her neck. "Well, what? How are you? Quite well?"

"Why, you haven't much of a place here!" she said, casting her eyes round my study. "You're a rich man, you receive a high salary, and yet . . . you live quite poorly.'

"Not everybody can live as luxuriously as the Count, my darling," I said. "But let us leave my wealth in peace. What good genius has brought you into my den?"

"Stop, Serezha! You'll tumble my frock. . . . Put me down. . . . I've only come to you for a moment, darling! I told everybody at home I was going to Akat'ikha, the Count's washerwoman, who lives here only three doors off. Let me go, darling! . . . It's awkward. Why haven't you been to see me for so long?"

I answered something, placed her on a chair opposite me, and began to contemplate her beauty. For a minute we looked at each other in silence.

"You are very pretty, Olia!" I sighed. "It's a pity and an insult that you're so pretty!"

"Why is it a pity?"

"The devil only knows who's got you."

"But what do you want more? Am I not I yours? Here I am. . . . Listen, Serezha! . . . Will you tell me the truth if I ask you?"

"Of course, only the truth."

"Would you have married me if I had not married Pëtr Egorych?"

"Probably not," I wanted to say, but why should I probe the painful wound in poor Olia's heart that was already so troubled?

"Certainly," I said in the tone of a man speaking the truth.

Olia sighed and cast her eyes down.

"What a mistake I've made! What a mistake! And what's worst of all it

an't be rectified! I suppose I can't et divorced from him?"

"You can't."

"I can't understand why I was in such hurry! We girls are so silly and ddy. . . . There's nobody to whip ! However, one can't undo the past, d to reason about it is useless. . . . either reasoning nor tears are of any od. Serezha, I cried all last night! e was there . . . lying next to me, and was thinking of you. . . . I couldn't ep. . . . I wanted to run away in the ght, even into the wood to father. . . . It is better to live with a mad ther than with this—what's his name."

"Reasoning won't help. . . . Olia, u ought to have reasoned when you ove home with me from Tenevo, and ere so happy at getting married to a ch man. . . . It's too late to practice quence now. . . ."

"Too late. . . . Then let it be so!" ga said with a decisive wave of the nd. It will be possible to live, if it no worse. . . . Good-bye, I must be . . . ."

"No, not good-bye. . . ."

I drew Olia towards me and covered r face with kisses, as if I were trying reward myself for the lost three days. e pressed close against me like a cold mb and warmed my face with her hot eath. . . . There was stillness in the om. . . .

"The husband killed his wife!" bawled y parrot.

Olia shivered, released herself from y embraces, and looked inquiringly at e.

"It's only the parrot, my soul," I said. Calm yourself."

"The husband killed his wife!" Ivan m'yanych repeated again.

Olia rose, put on her hat in silence, and gave me her hand. Dread was written on her face.

"What if Urbenin gets to know?" she asked, looking at me with wide-open eyes. "He is capable of killing me."

"What nonsense!" I said, laughing. "What sort of a fellow would I be if I allowed him to kill you? He's hardly capable of such an unusual act as a murder. . . . Are you going? Well, then, good-bye, my child! . . . I will wait. . . . To-morrow, in the wood, near the house where you lived. . . . Shall we meet there?" . . .

After seeing Olia off, I returned to my study, where I found Polycarp. He was standing in the middle of the room, he looked sternly at me and shook his head contemptuously.

"Sergei Petrovich, see that this sort of thing does not happen here again; I won't have it," he said in the tone of a severe parent. "I don't wish it. . . ."

"What's 'it'?"

"That thing. . . . You think I did not see? I saw everything. . . . See that she doesn't dare to come here again. This is no house for that sort of philandering. There are other places for that. . . ."

I was in the best of humours, so Polycarp's spying and mentorial tone did not make me angry. I only laughed and sent him to the kitchen.

I had hardly had time to collect my thoughts after Olga's visit when another guest arrived. A carriage rattled up to my door and Polycarp, spitting to each side and with mumbled abuse announced the arrival of "that there fellow, may he be . . . !" etc., etc. It was the Count, whom he hated with the whole strength of his soul. The Count

entered, looked tearfully at me, and shook his head.

"You turn away. . . . You don't want to speak . . ."

"I don't turn away," I said.

"I am so fond of you, Serezha, and you . . . for a trifle! Why do you wound me? Why?"

The Count sat down, sighed, and shook his head.

"Well, you've played the fool long enough!" I said. "All right!"

I had a strong influence upon this weak, puny little man; it was as strong as my contempt for him. . . . My contemptuous tone never offended him; on the contrary. . . . When he heard my "All right!" he jumped up and embraced me.

"I have brought him with me. . . . He is sitting in the carriage. . . . Do you wish him to apologize?"

"Do you know his fault?"

"No. . . ."

"So much the better. He needn't apologize, but you had better warn him that if ever a similar thing occurs, I'll not get excited, but I will take my own measures."

"Then, Serezha, it's peace? Excellent! That ought to have been long ago; the deuce only knows what you quarrelled about! Like two schoolgirls! Oh, by-the-by, golubchek, haven't you got half a glass of vodka? My throat is terribly dry!"

I ordered vodka to be served. The Count drank two glasses, sprawled himself out on the sofa, and began to chatter.

"I say, brother, I just met Olia. . . . A fine girl! I must tell you, I'm beginning to detest Urbenin. . . . That means that Olenka is beginning to please me. . . . She's devilish pretty! I think of making up to her."

"One ought not to touch the married ones!" I said with a sigh.

"Come now, he's an old man. . . . It's no sin to juggle Pëtr Egorych out of his wife. . . . She's no mate for him. . . . He's like a dog; he can't eat it himself, and won't let others have it. . . . I'm going to begin my siege to-day; I'll begin systematically. . . . She's such a ducky—h'm!—quite chic, brother! One licks one's chops!"

The Count drank a third glass and continued:

"Of the girls here, do you know who pleases me too? Nadenka, that fool Kalinin's daughter. . . . A burning brunette, you know the sort, pale, with wonderful eyes. . . . I must also cast my line there . . . I'm giving a party at Whitsuntide, a musical, vocal, literary evening on purpose to invite her . . . As it turns out, it's not so bad here; quite jolly! There's society, and women . . . and . . . May I have five winks here . . . only a moment?"

"You may . . . But how about Pshekhotsky in the carriage?"

"He may wait, the devil take him . . . Brother, I myself don't like him."

The Count raised himself on his elbow and said mysteriously:

"I keep him only from necessity . . . because I must. . . . May the devil take him!"

The Count's elbow gave way, his head sank on the cushion. A minute later snores were heard.

In the evening after the Count had left, I had another visitor; the doctor Pavel Ivanovich. He came to inform me of Nadezhda Nikolaevna's illness and also that she had definitely refused him

er hand. The poor fellow was down-earted and went about like a drenched en.

CHAPTER XVII

ALL-POWERFUL

THE poetical month of May had assed.

The lilacs and tulips were over, and ate decreed that with them the ecstasies f love, which, notwithstanding their uiltiness and painfulness, had yet oc-asionally afforded us sweet moments nat can never be effaced from our emory, should likewise wither. There re moments for which one would give onths, yea, even years!

On a June evening when the sun as already set, but its broad track in urple and gold still glowed in the stant West, fortelling a calm and clear ay for the morrow, I rode on Zorka o to the house where Urbenin lived. n that evening the Count was giving musical party. The guests were al-ady arriving, but the Count was not home; he had gone for a ride and d left word he would return soon.

A little later I was standing at the orch, holding my horse by the bridle d chatting with Urbenin's little aughter, Sasha. Urbenin himself was tting on the steps with his head sup-orted on his fists, looking into the dis-nce, which could be seen through the pen gates. He was gloomy and an-wered my questions reluctantly. I ft him in peace and occupied myself ith Sasha.

"Where is your new máma?" I asked r.

"She has gone out riding with the unt. She rides with him every day."

"Every day!" Urbenin grumbled with a sigh.

Much could be heard in that sigh The same feelings could be heard in it that were agitating my soul and that I was trying to explain to myself, but was unable to do so, and therefore became lost in conjecture.

Every day Olga went out for rides with the Count. But that was a trifle. Olga could not fall in love with the Count, and Urbenin's jealousy was groundless. We ought not to have been jealous of the Count, but of something else which, however, I could not understand for a long time. This "something else" built up a whole wall between Olga and me. She continued to love me, but after the visit which has been described in the last chapter, she had not been to my house more than twice, and when we met in other places she flared up in a strange way and obstinately refused to answer my questions. She returned my caresses with passion, but her movements were sudden and startled, so that our short rendezvous only left a feeling of painful perplexity in my mind. Her conscience was not clean; this was clear, but what was the real cause? Nothing could be read on Olga's guilty face.

"I hope your new máma is well?" I asked Sasha.

"She's quite well. Only in the night she had toothache. She cried."

"She cried," Urbenin repeated, looking at Sasha. "Did you see it? My darling, you only dreamed it."

Olga had not had toothache. If she had cried it was not with pain, but for something else. . . . I wanted to continue talking to Sasha, but I did not succeed in this, as at that moment the noise of horses' hoofs was heard and

we soon saw the riders—a man inelegantly jumping about in his saddle, and a graceful lady rider. In order to hide my joy from Olga, I took Sasha into my arms and, smothing her fair hair with my hand, I kissed her on the forehead.

"Sasha, how pretty you are!" I said. "And what nice curls you have!"

Olga cast a rapid glance at me, returned my bow in silence, and leaning on the Count's arm, entered the house. Urbenin rose and followed her.

Five minutes later the Count came out of the house. He was gay. I had never seen him so gay before. Even his face had a fresher look.

"Congratulate me," he said, giggling, as he took my arm.

"What on?"

"On my conquest. . . . One more ride like this, and I swear by the ashes of my noble ancestors I shall tear the petals from this flower."

"You have not torn them off yet?"

"As yet? . . . Almost! During ten minutes, 'Thy hand in my hand,'" the Count sang, "and . . . not once did she draw it away. . . . I kissed it! Wait for tomorrow. Now let us go. They are expecting me. Oh, by-the-by, golubchek, I want to talk to you about something. Tell me, old man, is it true what people say—that you are . . . that you entertain evil intentions with regard to Nadenka Kalinin?"

"Why?"

"If that were true, I won't come in your way. It's not in my principles to put a spoke in another's wheels. If, however, you have no sort of intentions, then of course——"

"I have none."

"*Merci*, my soul!"

The Count thought of killing two hares at the same time, and was firmly convinced that he would succeed. On the evening I am describing I watched the chase of these two hares. The chase was stupid and as comical as a good caricature. When watching it one could only laugh or be revolted at the Count's vulgarity, but nobody could have thought that this schoolboy chase would end with the moral fall of some, the ruin and the crimes of others!

The Count not only killed two hares but more! He killed them, but he did not get their skins and their flesh.

I saw him secretly press Olga's hand who received him each time with a friendly smile and looked after him with a contemptuous grimace. Once, evidently wishing to show that there were no secrets between us, he even kissed her hand in my presence.

"What a blockhead!" she whispered into my ear, and wiped her hand.

"I say, Olga," I asked, when the Count had gone away. "I think there is something you want to tell me. What is it?"

I looked searchingly into her face. She blushed scarlet and began to blink in a frightened manner, like a cat who has been caught stealing.

"Olga," I said sternly, "you must tell me! I demand it!"

"Yes, there is something I want to tell you," she whispered. "I love you—I can't live without you—but . . . my darling, don't come to see me any more. Don't love me any more, and don't call me Olia. It can't go on . . . It's impossible. . . . And don't let anybody see that you love me."

"But why is this?"

"I want it. The reasons you need ot know, and I won't tell you. Go. . . . Leave me!"

I did not leave her, and she herself as obliged to bring our conversation to a end. Taking the arm of her husband, ho was passing us at that moment, she odded to me with a hypocritical smile, ad went away.

The Count's other hare—Nadenka alinin—was honoured that evening by e Count's special attention. The nole evening he hovered around her, told her anecdotes, he was witty, he rted with her, and she, pale and exusted, drew her lips to one side in a rced smile. The justice of the peace, alinin, watched them all the time, roking his beard and coughing imrtantly. That the Count was paying urt to his daughter was agreeable to m. "He has a Count as son-in-law!" hat thought could be sweeter for a ovincial *bon-vivant?* From the moent that the Count began to pay court his daughter he had grown at least ree feet in height in his own estimaon. And with what stately glances he easured me, how maliciously he ughed when he talked to me! "So you ood on ceremonies and went away—was all one to us! Now we have a unt!"

The day after the party I was again at e Count's estate. This time I did not lk with Sasha but with her brother, e schoolboy. The boy led me into the rden and poured out his whole soul to e. These confidences were the result my questions as to how he got on th his "new mother."

"She's your good acquaintance," he gan, nervously unbuttoning his uniorm. "You will repeat it to her; but I don't care. You may tell her whatever you like! She's spiteful, she's base!"

He told me that Olga had taken his room from him, she had sent away their old nurse who had served at Urbenin's for ten years, she was always screaming about something and always angry.

"Yesterday you admired sister Sasha's hair. . . . Hadn't she pretty hair? Just like flax! This morning she cut it all off!"

"That was jealousy," I thus explained to myself Olga's invasion into the hairdresser's domain.

"She was evidently envious that you had praised Sasha's hair and not her own," the boy said in confirmation of my thought. "She worries papasha, too. Papasha is spending a terrible lot of money on her, and is neglecting his work. . . . He has again begun to drink! Again! She's a little fool. . . . She cries all day that she has to live in poverty in such a small house. Is it papasha's fault that he has little money?"

The boy told me many sad things. He saw that which his blinded father did not see or did not want to see. In the poor boy's opinion his father was wronged, his sister was wronged, his old nurse had been wronged. He had been deprived of his little den where he had been used to occupy himself with his books, and feed the goldfinches he had caught. Everybody had been wronged, everybody was laughed at by his stupid and all-powerful stepmother! But the poor boy could not have imagined the terrible wrong that his young stepmother would inflict on his family, and of which I was witness that very evening after my talk with him. Everything else grew

dim before that wrong, the cropping of Sasha's hair appeared as a mere trifle in comparison with it.

CHAPTER XVIII

WRATH!

LATE at night I was sitting with the Count. As usual, we were drinking. The Count was quite drunk, I only slightly.

"To-day I was allowed accidentally to touch her waist," he mumbled. "To-morrow, therefore, we can begin to go further."

"Well, and Nadia? How do things stand with Nadia?"

"We are progressing! I've only begun with her as yet. So far, we are passing through the period of conversations with the eyes. I love to read in her sad black eyes, brother. Something is written there that words are unable to express, that only the soul can understand. Let's have another drink!"

"It seems that you please her since she has the patince to listen to you for hours at a time. You also please her papa!"

"Her papa? Are you talking about that blockhead? Ha, ha! The simpleton suspects me of honourable intentions."

The Count coughed and drank.

"He thinks I'll marry her! To say nothing of my not being able to marry, when one considers the question honestly it would be more honest in me to seduce a girl than to marry her. . . . An eternal life with a drunken, coughing, semi-old man . . . br-r-r! My wife would pine away, or she would run away the next day. . . . What noise is that?"

The Count and I jumped up. . . . Several doors were slammed to, and almost at the same moment Olga rushed into the room. She was as white as snow, and trembled like a chord that had been struck violently. Her hair was falling loose around her. The pupils of her eyes were dilated. She was out of breath and was crumpling in her hand the front pleats of her dressing-gown.

"Olga, what is the matter with you?" I asked, seizing her by the hand and turning pale.

The Count ought to have been surprised at this familiar form of address, but he did not hear it. His whole person was turned into one large note of interrogation, and with open mouth and staring eyes he stood looking at Olga as if she were an apparition.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"He beats me!" Olga said, and fell sobbing on to an armchair. "He beats me!"

"Who is he?"

"My husband! I can't live with him! I have left him!"

"This is revolting!" the Count exclaimed, and he struck the table with his fist. "What right has he? This is tyranny! This . . . the devil only knows what it is! To beat his wife? To beat! What did he do it for?"

"For nothing, for nothing at all," Olga said, wiping away her tears. "I pulled my handkerchief out of my pocket, and the letter you sent me yesterday fell on the floor. . . . He seized it and read it . . . and began to beat me. . . . He clutched my hand and crushed it—look, there are still red spots on it—and demanded an explanation. . . . Instead of explaining, I ran here. . . . Can't you defend

me? He has not the right to treat his wife so roughly! I'm no cook! I'm a noblewoman!"

The Count paced about the room and jabbered with his drunken, muddling tongue some sort of nonsense which when rendered into sober language was intended to mean "of the status of women in Russia."

"This is barbarous! This is New Zealand! Does this muzhik also think that at his funeral his wife will have her throat cut? Savages when they go into the next world take their wives with them!"

I could not recover from my surprise. How was this sudden visit of Olga's in a nightdress to be understood? What was I to think—what to decide? If she had been beaten, if her dignity had been wounded, why had she not run away to her father or to the housekeeper? . . . Lastly why not to me, who was certainly near to her? And had she really been insulted? My heart told me of the innocence of simple-minded Urbenin, and understanding the truth, it sank with the pain that the stupefied husband must have been feeling at that time. Without asking any questions, not knowing where to commence, I began to soothe Olga and offered her wine.

"What a mistake I made! What a mistake!" she sighed between her tears, lifting the wineglass to her lips. "What sanctimoniousness he feigned when he was courting me! I thought he was an angel and not a man!"

"So you wanted him to be pleased with the letter that fell out of your pocket?" I asked. "You wanted him to burst out laughing?"

"Don't let us talk about it!" the Count interrupted. "Whatever might have been, his action was dastardly all the same. Women are not treated in that way. I'll challenge him. I'll teach him. Olga Nikolaevna, believe me he'll have to suffer for this!"

The Count gobbled like a young turkey cock, although he had no authority to come between husband and wife. I kept silent and did not contradict him, because I knew that to take vengeance for another man's wife was limited to drunken ebullitions of words between four walls, and that everything about the duel would be forgotten the next day. But why was Olga silent? . . . I did not wish to think that she was not loth to have the proposed service rendered her by the Count. I did not wish to think that this silly, beautiful cat had so little dignity, that she would willingly consent to the drunken Count being judge between man and wife.

"I'll mix him with the dirt!" piped this newly-fledged knight-errant. "I'll end by boxing his ears! I'll do it tomorrow!"

And she did not stop the mouth of that blackguard, who in his drunken mood was insulting a man whose only blame was that he had made a mistake and was now being duped. Urbenin had seized and pressed her hand very roughly, and this had caused her scandalous flight to the Count's house, and now, when before her eyes this drunken and morally degenerate creature was defaming the honest name and pouring filthy slops on a man, who at that time must have been languishing in melancholy and uncertainty, knowing that he was deceived, she did not even move a hair of her eyebrows!

While the Count was pouring out his wrath and Olga was wiping her eyes, the

manservant brought in some roast partridges. . . . The Count put half a partridge on his guest's plate. She shook her head negatively and then mechanically took up her knife and fork and began to eat. The partridge was followed by a large glass of wine, and soon there were no more signs of tears with the exception of red spots near the eyes and occasional deep sighs.

Soon we heard laughter. . . . Olga laughed like a consoled child who had forgotten its injury. And the Count looking at her laughed too.

"Do you know what I have thought of?" he began, sitting down next to her. "I want to arrange private theatricals. We shall act plays in which there are good women's parts. Eh? What do you say to that?"

They began to talk about the private theatricals. How ill this silly chatter accorded with the terror that had but lately been depicted on Olga's face, when only an hour before she had rushed into the room, pale and weeping, with flowing hair! How cheap were those terrors, those tears!

Meanwhile time went on. The clock struck twelve. Respectable women go to bed at that time. Olga ought to have gone away long since. But the clock struck half-past twelve; it struck one, and she was still sitting there chatting with the Count.

"It's time to go to bed," I said, looking at my watch. "I'm off! . . . Olga Nikolaevna, will you permit me to escort you?"

Olga looked at me and then at the Count.

"Where am I to go?" she murmured. "I can't go to him!"

"Yes, yes; of course, you can't go to him," the Count said. "Who can answer for his not beating you again? No, no!"

I walked about the room. All was quiet. I paced from corner to corner and my friend and my mistress followed my steps with their eyes. I seemed to understand this quiet and these glances. There was something expectant and impatient in them. I put my hat on the table and sat down on the sofa.

"So, sir," the Count mumbled and rubbed his hands impatiently. "So, sir. . . . Things are like this. . . ."

The clock struck half-past one. The Count looked quickly at the clock, frowned and began to walk about the room. I could see by the glances he cast on me that he wanted to say something, something important but ticklish and unpleasant.

"I say, Serezha!" he at last picked up courage, sat down next to me, and whispered in my ear. "Golubchek, don't be offended. . . . Of course, you will understand my position, and you won't find my request strange or rude."

"Tell me quickly. No need to mince matters!"

"You see how things stand . . . how . . . Go away, golubchek! You are interfering with *us*. . . She will remain with me. . . . Forgive me for sending you away, but . . . you will understand my impatience!"

"All right!"

My friend was loathsome. If I had not been fastidious, perhaps I would have crushed him like a beetle, when he, shivering as if with fever, asked me to leave him alone with Urbenin's wife. He, the debilitated anchorite, steeped through and through with spirits and

disease, wanted to take the poetic "girl in red" who dreamed of an effective death and had been nurtured by the forests and the angry lake! No, she must be miles away from him!

I went up to her.

"I am going," I said.

She nodded her head.

"Am I to go away? Yes?" I asked, trying to read the truth in her lovely, blushing little face. "Yes?"

With the very slightest movement of her long black eyelashes she answered "Yes."

"You have considered well?"

She turned away from me, as one turns away from an annoying wind. She did not want to speak. Why should she speak? It is impossible to answer a long subject briefly, and there was neither time nor place for long speeches.

I took up my hat and left the room without taking leave. Afterwards, Olga told me that immediately after my departure, as soon as the sound of my steps became mingled with the noise of the wind in the garden, the drunken Count was pressing her in his embrace. And she, closing her eyes and stopping up her mouth and nostrils, was scarcely able to keep her feet from a feeling of disgust. There was even a moment when she had almost torn herself away from his embraces and rushed into the lake. There were moments when she tore her hair and wept. It is not easy to sell oneself.

When I left the house and went towards the stables, I had to pass the bailiff's house. I looked in at the window. Pëtr Egorych was seated at a table by the dim light of a smoking oil lamp that had been turned up too high. I did not see his face. It was covered by his hands. But the whole of his robust, awkward figure displayed so much sorrow, anguish and despair that it was not necessary to see the face to understand the condition of his soul. Two bottles stood before him; one was empty, the other only just begun. They were both vodka bottles. The poor devil was seeking peace not in himself, nor in other people, but in alcohol.

Five minutes later I was riding home. The darkness was terrible. The lake blustered wrathfully and seemed to be angry that I, such a sinner, who had just been the witness of a sinful deed, should dare to infringe its austere peace. I could not see the lake for the darkness. It seemed as if an unseen monster was roaring, that the very darkness which enveloped me was roaring too.

I pulled up Zorka, closed my eyes and meditated to the roaring of the monster.

"What if I returned at once and destroyed them?"

Terrible wrath raged in my soul. All the little of goodness and honesty that remained in me after long years of a depraved life, all that corruption had left, all that I guarded and cherished, that I was proud of, was insulted, spat upon, splashed with filth!

I had known venal women before, I had bought them, studied them, but they had not had the innocent rosy cheeks and sincere blue eyes that I had seen on the May morning when I walked through the wood to the Tenevo fair. . . . I myself, corrupt to the marrow of my bones, had forgiven, had preached tolerance of everything vicious, and I was indulgent to weakness. . . . I was convinced that it was impossible to

demand of dirt that it should not be dirt, and that one cannot blame those ducats which from the force of circumstances have fallen into the mire. But I had not known before that ducats could melt in the mire and be blended with it into a single mass. Consequently gold could also dissolve!

A strong gust of wind blew off my hat and bore it into the surrounding darkness. In its flight my hat touched Zorka's head. She took fright, reared on her hind legs and galloped off along the familiar road.

When I reached home I threw myself on the bed. Polycarp suggested that I should undress, and he got sworn at and called a "devil" for no earthly reason.

"Devil yourself!" Polycarp grumbled as he went away from my bed.

"What did you say. What did you say?" I shouted.

"None so deaf as those who will not hear!"

"Oh, ho! . . . You dare to be impudent!" I thundered and poured out all my bile on my poor lackey. "Get out! That no trace of you be left, scoundrel! Out with you!"

And without waiting for my man to leave the room, I fell on the bed and began to sob like a boy. My overstrained nerves could bear no more. Powerless wrath, wounded feelings, jealousy—all had to have vent in one way or another.

"The husband killed his wife!" squalled my parrot, raising his yellow feathers.

Under the influence of this cry the thought entered my head that Urbenin might really kill his wife.

Falling asleep, I dreamed of murders. My nightmare was suffocating and painful. . . . It appeared to me that my hands were stroking something cold, and I had only to open my eyes to see a corpse. I dreamed that Urbenin was standing at the head of my bed, looking at me with imploring eyes.

CHAPTER XIX

SOURCES

After the night that is described above a calm set in.

I remained at home, only allowing myself to leave the house or ride about on business. Heaps of work had accumulated, therefore it was impossible for me to be dull. From morning till night I sat at my writing-table scribbling, or examining people who had fallen into my magisterial claws. I was no longer drawn to Karnéevka, the Count's estate.

I thought no more of Olga. That which falls from the load is lost; and she was just what had fallen from my load and was, as I thought, irrecoverably lost. I thought no more about her and did not want to think about her.

"Silly, vicious trash!" I said to myself whenever her memory arose in my mind in the midst of my strenuous work.

Occasionally, however, when I lay down to sleep or when I awoke in the morning, I remembered various moments of our acquaintance, and the short connexion I had had with Olga. I remembered the "Stone Grave," the little house in the wood in which "the girl in red" lived, the road to Tenevo, the meeting in the grotto . . . and my heart began to beat faster. . . . I experienced bitter heartache. . . . But it was not for long. The bright

memories were soon obliterated under the weight of the gloomy ones. What poetry of the past could withstand the filth of the present? And now, when I had finished with Olga, I looked upon this "poetry" quite differently to formerly. . . . Now I looked upon it as an optical illusion, a lie, hypocrisy . . . and it lost half its charm in my eyes.

The Count had become quite repugnant to me. I was glad not to see him, and I was always angry when his moustachioed face rose timidly to my mind. Every day he sent me letters in which he implored me not to sulk but to come to see the no longer "solitary hermit." Had I listened to his letters, I would have been doing a displeasure to myself.

"It's finished!" I thought. "Thank God! . . . It bored me. . . ."

I decided to break off all connexion with the Count, and this decision did not cost me the slightest struggle. Now I was not at all the same man that I had been three weeks before, when after the quarrel about Pshekhotsky I could scarcely bring myself to sit at home. There was no attraction now.

Sitting always at home bored me at last, and I wrote to Doctor Pavel Ivanovich, asking him to come and have a chat. For some reason I received no reply to this letter, so I wrote another. But the second received the same answer as the first. Evidently dear "Screw" pretended to be angry. . . . The poor fellow having received a refusal from Nadenka Kalinin, looked upon me as the cause of his misfortune. He had the right to be angry, and if he had ever been angry before it was merely because he did not know how to.

"When had he time to learn?" I thought, being perplexed at not receiving answers to my letters.

In the third week of obstinate seclusion in my own house the Count paid me a visit. Having scolded me for not riding over to see him nor sending him answers to his letters, he stretched himself out on the sofa and before he began to snore he spoke on his favourite theme—on women.

"I understand," he began languidly, screwing up his eyes and placing his hands under his head, "that you are delicate and susceptible. You don't come to me from fear of breaking into our duet . . . interfering. . . . An unwelcome guest is worse than a Tartar, a guest during the honeymoon is worse than a horned devil. I understand you. But, my dear friend, you forget that you are a friend and not a guest, that you are loved, esteemed. By your presence you would only complete the harmony. . . . And what harmony, my dear brother! A harmony that I am unable to describe to you!"

The Count pulled his hands out from under his head and began to wave them about.

"I myself am unable to understand if I am living happily or not. The devil himself would not be able to understand it. There are certainly moments when one would give half one's life for a 'bis,' but on the other hand there are days when one paces the rooms from corner to corner, as if beside oneself and ready to cry. . . ."

"For what reason?"

"Brother, I can't understand that Olga. She's a sort of ague and not a woman. In ague one has either fever or shivering fits. That's how she is; five

changes every day. She is either gay or so dull that she swallows her tears and prays. . . . Sometimes she loves me, sometimes she doesn't. There are moments when she caresses me as no woman has ever caressed me in my whole life. But sometimes it is like this: You awake unexpectedly, you open your eyes, and you see a face turned on you . . . such a terrible, such a savage face . . . a face that is all distorted with malignancy and aversion. . . . When one sees such a thing all the enchantment vanishes. . . . And she often looks at me in that way. . . ."

"With aversion?"

"Well, yes! . . . I can't understand it. . . . She swears that she came to me only for love, and still hardly a night passes that I do not see that face. How is it to be explained? I begin to think, though of course I don't want to believe it, that she can't bear me and has given herself to me for those rags which I buy for her now. She's terribly fond of rags! She's capable of standing before the mirror from morning to evening in a new frock; she is capable of crying for days and nights about a spoilt flounce. . . . She's terribly vain. What chiefly pleases her in me is that I'm a Count. She would never have loved me had I not been a Count. Never a dinner or supper passes that she does not reproach me with tears in her eyes, for not surrounding myself with aristocratic society. You see, she would like to reign in that society. . . . A strange girl!"

The Count fixed his dim eyes on the ceiling and became pensive. I noticed, to my great astonishment, that this time, as an exception, he was sober. This struck and even touched me.

"You are quite normal to-day," I said. "You are not drunk, and you don't ask for vodka. What's the meaning of this dream?"

"Yes, so it is! I had no time to drink, I've been thinking. . . . I must tell you, Serezha, I'm seriously in love; it's no joke. I am terribly fond of her. It's quite natural, too. . . . She's a rare woman, not of the ordinary sort, to say nothing of her appearance. Not much intellect, to be sure, but what feeling, elegance, freshness! She can't be compared with my former Amalias, Angelicas, and Grushas, whose love I have enjoyed till now. She's something from another world, a world I do not know."

"Philosophizing!" I laughed.

"I'm captivated, I've almost fallen in love! But now I see it is useless to try to square a naught. It was only a mask that raised false expectations in me. The pink cheeks of innocence proved to be rouge, the kiss of love—the request to buy a new frock. . . . I took her into my house like a wife, and she behaves like a mistress who is paid with money. But it's enough now. I am restraining my soul's expectations, and am beginning to see in Olga a mistress. . . . Enough!"

"Well, why not? How about the husband?"

"The husband? Hm! . . . What do you think he's about?"

"I think it is impossible to imagine a more unhappy man."

"You think that? Quite uselessly. . . . He's such a scoundrel, such a rascal, that I am not at all sorry for him. . . . A rascal can never be unhappy, he'll always find his way out."

"Why do you abuse him in that way?"

"Because he's a rogue. You know that I esteemed him, that I trusted him as a friend . . . I and you too—in general everybody considered him an honest, respectable man who was incapable of cheating. Meanwhile he has been robbing, plundering me! Taking advantage of his position of bailiff, he disposed of my property as he liked. The only things he did not take were those that could not be moved from their places."

I, who knew Urbenin to be a man in the highest degree honest and disinterested, jumped up as if I had been stung when I heard these words spoken by the Count, and went up to him.

"Have you caught him in the act of stealing?" I asked.

"No, but I know of his thievish tricks from trustworthy sources."

"May I ask from what sources?"

"You needn't be uneasy. I would not accuse a man without cause. Olga has told me all about him. Even before she became his wife she saw with her own eyes what loads of slaughtered fowls and geese he sent to town. She saw how my geese and fowls were sent as presents to a certain benefactor where his son, the schoolboy, lodged. More than that, she saw flour, millet and lard being dispatched there. Admitted that all these are trifles, but did these trifles belong to him? Here we have not a question of value but of principle. Principles were trespassed against. There's more, sir! She saw in his cupboard packets of money. In answer to her question whose money it was and where he had got it, he begged her not to mention to anybody that he had money. My dear fellow, you know he's as poor as a church mouse! His salary is scarcely sufficient for his board. Can you explain to me where this money came from?"

"And you, stupid fool, believe this little vermin?" I cried, stirred to the depths of my soul. "She is not satisfied with having run away from him and disgraced him in the eyes of the whole district. She must now betray him! What an amount of meanness is contained in that small and fragile body! Fowls, geese, millet. . . . Master, master! Your political economistic feelings, your agricultural stupidity are offended that at holiday time he sent a present of a slaughtered bird which the foxes or polecats would have eaten, if it had not been killed, and given away, but have you even once checked the huge accounts that Urbenin has handed in? Have you ever counted up the thousands and the tens of thousands? No? Then what is the use of talking to you? You are stupid and a beast. You would be glad to incriminate the husband of your mistress, but you don't know how!"

"My connexion with Olga has nothing to do with the matter. If he's her husband or not her husband is all one, but since he has robbed me, I must plainly call him a thief. But let us leave this roguery alone. Tell me, is it honest or dishonest to receive a salary and for whole days to lie about dead drunk? He is drunk every day. There wasn't a single day that I did not see him reeling about! Low and disgusting! Decent people don't act in that way."

"It's just because he's decent that he gets drunk," I said.

"You have a kind of passion for taking the part of such gentlemen. But I have decided to be unmerciful. I paid him off to-day and told him to clear out and

make room for another. My patience is exhausted!"

I considered it unnecessary to try to convince the Count that he was unjust, unpractical and stupid. It was not for me to defend Urbenin against the Count.

Five days later I heard that Urbenin with his schoolboy son and his little daughter had gone to live in the town. I was told that he drove to town drunk, half dead, and that he had twice fallen out of the cart. The schoolboy and Sasha had cried all the way.

CHAPTER XX

THEY ARE VENAL!

SHORTLY after Urbenin had left, I was obliged to go to the Count's estate, quite against my will. One of the Count's stables had been broken into at night and several valuable saddles had been carried off by the thieves. The examining magistrate, that is I, had been informed and *nolens-volens,* I was obliged to go there.

I found the Count drunk and angry. He was wandering about the rooms seeking a refuge from his melancholy but could not find one.

"I am worried by that Olga!" he said waving his hand. "She got angry with me this morning and she left the house threatening to drown herself! And, as you see, there are no signs of her yet. I know she won't drown herself. Still, it is nasty of her. Yesterday, all day long, she was rubbing her eyes and breaking crockery; the day before she over-ate herself with chocolate. The devil only knows what such natures are!"

I comforted the Count as well as I could and sat down to dinner with him.

"No, it's time to give up such childishness," he kept mumbling during dinner. "It's high time, for it is all stupid and ridiculous. Besides, I must also confess she is beginning to bore me with her sudden changes. I want something quiet, orderly, modest, you know—something like Nadenka Kalinin . . . a splendid girl!"

After dinner when I was walking in the garden I met the "drowned girl." When she saw me she became very red and (a strange woman) she began to laugh with joy. The shame on her face was mingled with pleasure, sorrow with happiness. For a moment she looked at me askance, then she rushed towards me and hung on my neck without saying a word.

"I love you!" she whispered, clinging to my neck. "I have been so sad without you. I should have died if you had not come."

I embraced her and silently led her to one of the summer-houses. Ten minutes later when parting from her, I took out of my pocket a twenty-five-rouble note and handed it to her. She opened her eyes wide.

"What is that for?"

"I am paying you for to-day's love."

Olga did not understand and continued to look at me with astonishment.

"You see, there are women who love for money," I explained. "They are venal. They must be paid for with money. Take it! If you take money from others why don't you want to take anything from he? I wish for no favours!"

Olga did not understand my cynicism in insulting her in this way. She did not know life as yet, and she did not understand the meaning of "venal women."

CHAPTER XXI

THAT LOUD LAUGH

It was a fine August day.

The sun warmed us in summer, and the blue sky fondly enticed you to wander far afield, but the air already bore presages of autumn. In the green foliage of the pensive forest the worn-out leaves were already assuming golden tints and the darkening fields looked melancholy and sad.

A dull presentiment of inevitable autumn weighed heavily on us all. It was not difficult to foresee the nearness of a catastrophe. The roll of thunder and the rain must soon come to refresh the sultry atmosphere. It is sultry before a thunderstorm when dark leaden clouds approach in the sky, and moral sultriness was oppressing us all. It was apparent in everything—in our movements, in our smiles, in our speech.

I was driving in a light wagonette. The daughter of the Justice of the Peace, Nadinka, was sitting beside me. She was white as snow, her chin and lips trembled as they do before tears, her deep eyes were full of sorrow, while all the time she laughed and tried to appear very gay.

In front and behind us a number of vehicles of all sorts, of all times, of all sizes were moving in the same direction. Ladies and men on horseback were riding on either side. Count Karnéev, clad in a green shooting costume that looked more like a buffoon's than a sportsman's, bending slightly forward and to one side, galloped about unmercifully on his black horse. Looking at his bent body and at the expression of pain that constantly appeared on his lean face, one could have thought that he was riding for the first time. A new double-barrelled gun was slung across his back, and at his side he had a game-bag in which a wounded woodcock tossed about.

Olga Urbenin was the ornament of the cavalcade. Seated on a black horse, which the Count had given her, dressed in a black riding-habit, with a white feather in her hat, she no longer resembled that "girl in red" who had met us in the wood only a few months before. Now there was something majestic, something of the *grande dame* in her figure. Each flourish of her whip, each smile was calculated to look aristocratic and majestic. In her movements, in her smiles there was something provocative, something incendiary. She held her head high in a foppishly arrogant manner, and from the height of her mount poured contempt on the whole company, as if in disdain of the loud remarks that were sent after her by our virtuous ladies. Coquetting with her impudence and her position "at the Count's," she seemed to defy everybody, just as if she did not know that the Count was already tired of her, and was only awaiting the moment when he could disentangle himself from her.

"The Count wants to send me away!" she said to me with a loud laugh when the cavalcade rode out of the yard. Therefore she knew her position and she understood it.

But why that loud laugh? I looked at her and was perplexed. Where could this dweller in the forests have found so much push? Where had she found time to sit her horse with so much grace, to move her nostrils proudly, and to show off with commanding gestures?

"A depraved woman is like a swine."

Doctor Pavel Ivanovich said to me. "If you set her down to table she puts her legs on it."

But his explanation was too simple. Nobody could be more infatuated with Olga than I was, and I was the first to be ready to throw stones at her; still, the uneasy voice of truth whispered to me that this was not push nor the swagger of a prosperous and satisfied woman, but the despairing presentiment of the near and inevitable catastrophe.

We were returning from the shoot to which we had gone early in the morning. The sport had been bad. Near the marshes, on which we had set great hopes, we met a party of sportsmen, who told us the game was wild. Three woodcocks and one duckling was all the game we were able to send to the other world as the whole result of ten guns. At last one of the lady riders had an attack of toothache and we were obliged to hurry back. We returned along a good road that passed through the fields on which the sheaves of newly reaped rye were looking yellow against the background of the dark, gloomy forests. . . . Near the horizon the church and houses of the Count's estate gleamed white. To their right the mirror-like surface of the lake stretched out wide, and to the left the "Stone Grave" rose darkly. . . .

"What a terrible woman!" Nadinka whispered to me every time Olga came up to our wagonette. "What a terrible woman! She's as bad as she's pretty! . . . How long ago is it since you were best man at her wedding? She has not had time to wear out her wedding shoes, and she is already wearing another man's silk and is flaunting in another man's diamonds. If she has such instincts it would have been more tactful had she waited a year or two. . . ."

"She's in a hurry to live! She has no time to wait!" I sighed.

"Do you know what has become of her husband?"

"I hear he is drinking. . . ."

"Yes. . . . The day before yesterday father was in town and saw him driving in a droshky. His head was hanging to one side, he was without a hat, and his face was dirty. . . . He's a lost man! He's terribly poor, I hear; they have nothing to eat, the flat is not paid for. Poor little Sasha is for days without food. Father described all this to the Count. . . . You know the Count! He is honest, kind, but he is not fond of thinking about anything, or reasoning. 'I'll send him a hundred roubles,' he said. And he did it at once. I don't think he could have insulted Urbenin more than by sending this money. . . . He'll feel insulted by the Count's gift and will drink all the more."

"Yes, the Count is stupid," I said. "He might have sent him the money through me, and in my name."

"He had no right to send him money! Have I the right to feed you if I am strangling you, and you hate me?"

"That is quite true. . . ."

We were silent and pensive. . . . The thought of Urbenin's fate was always very painful to me; now when his ruined wife was caracoling before my eyes, this thought aroused in me a whole train of sad reflections. . . . What would become of him and of his children? In what way would she end? In what moral puddle would this pitiful, puny Count end his days?

The creature seated next to me was the only one who was respectable and

worthy of esteem. There were only two people in our district whom I was capable of liking and respecting, and who alone had the right of turning from me because they stood higher than I did. . . . These were Nadezhda Kalinin and Doctor Pavel Ivanovich. . . . what awaited them?

"Nadezhda Nikolaevna," I said to her, "quite without wishing it, I have caused you no little sorrow, and less than anybody else have I the right to expect your confidence. But I swear to you nobody will understand you as well as I can. Your sorrow is my sorrow, your joy is my joy. If I ask you a question, don't suspect it is from idle curiosity. Tell me, my dear, why do you allow this pigmy Count to approach you? What prevents you from sending him away and not listening to his abominable amiabilities? His courting is no honour to a respectable woman! Why do you give these scandalmongers the right to couple your name with his?"

Nadinka looked at me with her bright eyes, and evidently reading sincerity in my face, she smiled gaily.

"What do they say?" she asked.

"They say your papa and you are trying to catch the Count, and that in the end you'll find the Count is only pulling your leg."

"They speak so because they don't know the Count!" Nadinka flared up. "The shameless slanderers! They are used to seeing only the bad side of people. . . . The good is inaccessible for their understanding."

"And have you found the good in him?"

"Yes, I have found it! You are the first who ought to know. I would not have let him approach me if I had not been certain of his honourable intentions!"

"Consequently your affairs have already reached 'honourable intentions,'" I said with astonishment. "Soon! . . . And on what are they based—these honourable intentions?"

"Do you wish to know?" she asked, and her eyes sparkled. "Those scandalmongers do not lie: I wish to marry him! Don't look so surprised, and don't laugh! You will say that to get married without love is dishonest and so on. It has already been said a thousand times, but . . . what am I to do? To feel that one is a useless bit of furniture in this world is very hard. . . . It's hard to live without an object. . . . When this man, whom you dislike so much, will have made me his wife, I shall have an object in life. . . . I will improve him, I will teach him to leave off drinking, I will teach him to work. . . . Look at him! He does not look like a man now, and I will make a man of him."

"Et cetera, et cetera," I said. "You will take care of his enormous fortune, you will do acts of charity. . . . The whole of the district will bless you, and will look upon you as a good angel sent down to comfort the miserable. . . . You will be the mother and the educator of his children. . . . Yes, a great work indeed! You are a clever girl, but you reason like a schoolgirl!"

"My idea may be worthless, it may be ludicrous and naïve, but I live by it. . . . Under its influence I have become well and gay. . . . Do not disenchant me! Let me disenchant myself, but not now, at some other time . . . afterwards, in the distant future. . . . Let us change the subject!"

"Just one more indiscreet question! Do you expect him to propose?"

"Yes. . . . To judge by the note I received from him to-day, my fate will be decided this evening . . . to-day. . . . He writes that he has something very important to say to me. . . . The happiness of the whole of his life depends upon my answer."

"Thank you for your frankness," I said.

The meaning of the note that Nadia had received was quite clear to me. A base proposal awaited the poor girl. I decided to save her from that ordeal.

"We have already arrived at our wood," the Count said, coming up to our wagonette. "Nadezhda Nikolaevna, would you not wish to make a halt here?"

And without waiting for an answer he clapped his hands and ordered in a loud, shaky voice:

"Ha-a-lt!"

We settled ourselves down in the skirts of the wood. The sun had sunk behind the trees, illuminating with purple and gold only the summits of the very highest alders and playing on the golden cross of the Count's church that could be seen in the distance. Flocks of frightened orioles and sparrow hawks soared over our heads. One of the men fired into them, alarming this feathered kingdom, still more, which aroused an indefatigable bird concert. This sort of concert has its charms in the spring and summer, but when you feel the approach of the cold autumn, in the air, it only irritates the nerves and reminds one of their near migration.

The coolness of evening spread from the dense forest. The ladies' noses became blue and the chilly Count began rubbing his hands. Nothing at that moment could be more appropriate than the odour of charcoal in the samovars and the clatter of the tea service. One-eyed Kuz'ma, puffing and panting and stumbling about in the long grass, dragged forward a case of cognac. We began to warm ourselves.

A long outing in the fresh cool air acts on the appetite better than any appetizing drops, and after it the balyk, the caviar, the roast partridge and the other viands were as caressing to the sight as roses are on an early spring morning.

"You are wise to-day," I said to the Count as I helped myself to a slice of balyk. "Wise as you have never been before. It would have been difficult to arrange things better. . . ."

"We have arranged it together, the Count and I," Kalinin said with a giggle as he winked towards the coachmen who were getting the hampers and baskets of provisions, wines and crockery out of the vehicles. "The little picnic will be a great success. . . . Towards the end there will be champagne!"

On this occasion the face of the Justice of the Peace shone with satisfaction as it had never shone before. Did he not expect that in the evening his Nadinka would have a proposal made to her? Did he not have the champagne prepared in order to drink the health of the young couple? I looked attentively at his face and, as usual, I could read nothing there but careless satisfaction, satiety, and the stupid self-importance that was suffused over the whole of his portly figure.

We fell upon the *hors d'œuvres* gaily

Only two of the guests looked with indifference on the luxurious viands that were spread out on carpets before us: these two were Olga and Nadezhda Kalinin. The first was standing to one side leaning against the back of a wagonette, motionless and silently gazing at the game-bag that the Count had thrown on the ground. In the game-bag a wounded woodcock was moving about. Olga watched the movements of the unfortunate bird and seemed to be expecting its death.

Nadia was sitting next to me and looked with indifference on the gaily chewing mouths.

"When will all this be over?" her tired eyes said.

I offered her a sandwich with caviar. She thanked me and put it to one side. She evidently did not wish to eat.

"Olga Nikolaevna, why don't you sit down?" the Count called to Olga.

Olga did not answer but continued to stare as immovable as a statue, looking at the bird.

"What heartless people there are," I said, going up to Olga. "Is it possible that you, a woman, are capable of watching with indifference the suffering of this woodcock? Instead of looking at his contortions, it would be better if you ordered it to be dispatched."

"Others suffer; let him suffer too," Olga answered, frowning, without looking at me.

"Who else is suffering?"

"Leave me in peace!" she said hoarsely. "I am not disposed to speak to you to-day . . . nor with your friend, that fool the Count! Go away from me!"

She glanced at me with eyes that were full of wrath and tears. Her face was pale, her lips trembled.

"What a change!" I said as I lifted up the game-bag and wrung the woodcock's neck. "What a tone! I am astounded! Quite astounded!"

"Leave me in peace, I tell you! I'm not in the humour for jokes!"

"What's the matter with you, my enchantress?"

Olga looked at me from head to foot and turned her back on me.

"Only depraved and venal women are spoken to in that tone," she continued. "You consider me such an one . . . well, then, go to those saints! . . . I am worse and baser than any other here. . . . When you were driving with that virtuous Nadinka you were afraid to look at me. . . . Well, then, go to her! What are you waiting for? Go!"

"Yes, you are worse and baser than any other here," I said, feeling that I was gradually being mastered by rage. "Yes, you are depraved and venal."

"Yes, I remember how you offered me damned money. . . . Then I did not know its meaning; now I understand. . . ."

Rage mastered me completely. And this rage was as strong as the love had been that at one time was beginning to be born in me for "the girl in red." . . . And who could—what stone could have remained indifferent? I saw before me beauty that had been cast by merciless fate into the mire. No mercy was shown to either youth, beauty or grace. . . . Now, when this woman appeared to me more beautiful than ever, I felt what a loss nature had sustained in her person, and my soul was filled with painful anger

at the injustice of fate and the order of things. . . .

In moments of anger I am unable to control myself. I do not know what more Olga would have had to hear from me if she had not turned her back upon me and gone away. She walked slowly towards the trees and soon disappeared behind them. . . . It appeared to me that she was crying. . . .

"Ladies and gentlemen," I heard Kalinin making a speech. "On this day when we all have met for . . . for . . . in order to unite . . . we are assembled here, we are all acquainted with each other, we are all enjoying ourselves and this long desired union we owe to nobody else but to our luminary, to the star of our province. . . . Count, don't get confused. . . . The ladies understand of whom I am speaking. . . . He, he he! Well, ladies and gentlemen, let us continue. As we owe all this to our enlightened, to our youthful . . . youthful . . . Count Karnéev, I propose that we drink this glass to . . . But who is driving this way? Who is it?"

A calash was driving from the direction of the Count's house towards the clearing where we were seated.

"Who can it be?" the Count said in astonishment, turning his field glass on the calash. "Hm! . . . strange! . . . It must be someone passing by. . . . Oh, no! I see Kaetan Kazimirovich's face. . . . With whom is he?"

Suddenly the Count sprang up as if he had been stung. His face became deadly pale, and the field glass fell from his hand. His eyes strayed around like the eyes of an entrapped mouse, and they rested sometimes on me, sometimes on Nadia, as if looking for aid. Not everybody noticed his confusion as the attention of most was directed on the approaching calash.

"Serezha, come here for a minute!" he whispered to me, seizing hold of my arm and leading me to one side. "Golubchek, I implore you as a friend, as the best of men! . . . No questions, no interrogating glances, no astonishment! I will tell you all afterwards! I swear that not an iota will remain a secret from you! . . . It is such a misfortune in my life, such a misfortune, that I am unable to find words to express it! You will know all, but no questions now! Help me!"

Meanwhile the calash came nearer and nearer. . . . At last it stopped, and the Count's stupid secret became the property of the whole district. Pshekhotsky, clad in a new unbleached silk suit, panting and smiling, crawled out of the calash. After him a young lady of about three-and-twenty sprang out adroitly. She was a tall, graceful, fair woman with regular but not sympathetic features, and with dark blue eyes. I only remember those dark blue expressionless eyes, a powdered nose, a heavy luxurious dress and several massive bracelets on each arm. . . . I remember that the scent of the evening dampness and the spilt cognac had to give way before the penetrating odour of some sort of perfume.

"What a numerous party!" the stranger said in broken Russian. "It must be very gay! How do you do Alexis?"

She went up to Alexis and offered him her cheek, which the Count smacked hastily and glanced uneasily at his guests.

"My wife, let me introduce her!" he

mumbled. "And these, Zosia, are my good friends. . . . Hm, hm! . . . I've a cough!"

"And I have only just arrived! Kaetan advised me to rest! But I said: 'Why should I rest since I slept the whole way here! I would sooner go to the shooting party!' I dressed and here I am. . . . Kaetan, where are my cigarettes?"

Pshekhotsky sprang forward and handed the fair lady her golden cigarette case.

"And this is my wife's brother . . ." the Count continued to mumble, pointing at Pshekhotsky. "Why don't you help me?" and he gave me a poke in the ribs. "Help me out, for God's sake!"

I have been told that Kalinin fainted, and that Nadia, who wished to help him, could not rise from her seat. I have been told many got into their vehicles and drove away. All this I did not see. I remember that I went into the wood, and searching for a footpath, without looking in front, I went where my feet led me.*

When I came out of the wood, bits of clay were hanging to my feet, and I was covered with dirt. I had probably been obliged to jump over brooks, but I could not remember this fact. It seemed to me as though I had been severely beaten with sticks; I felt so weary and exhausted. I ought to have gone to the Count's stable yard, mounted my Zorka and ridden away. But I did not do so, and went home on foot. I could not bring myself to see the Count or his accursed estate.*

. . . . . .

My road led along the banks of the lake. That watery monster was already beginning to roar out its evening song. High waves with white crests covered the whole of its vast extent. In the air there was noise and rumbling. A cold, damp wind penetrated to my very bones. To the left lay the angry lake; from the right came the monotonous noise of the austere forest. I felt myself alone with nature as if I had been confronted with it. It appeared as if the whole of its wrath, the whole of these noises and roars, was directed only on my head. In other circumstances I might have felt timidity, but now I scarcely noticed the giants that surrounded me. What was the wrath of nature compared with the storm that was raging within me? †

CHAPTER XXII

WHY DID I KILL IT?

WHEN I reached home I fell upon my bed without undressing.

"Shameless eyes, again he has bathed in the lake in all his clothes!" grumbled Polycarp as he pulled off my wet and

* At this point of Kamyshev's manuscript a hundred lines have been effaced.—A. Ch.

* At this place of the manuscript, a pretty girl's face, with an expression of horror on it, is drawn in pen and ink. All that is written below it has been carefully blotted out. The upper half of the next page is also scratched out and only one word: "temple," can be deciphered through the dense ink blots.—A. Ch.

† Here again there are erasures.
—A. Ch.

dirty garments. "Again a punishment for me! Again we have the noble, the educated, worse than any chimney-sweep. . . . I don't know what they taught you in the 'versity!"

I, who could not bear the human voice or man's face, wanted to shout at Polycarp that he should leave me in peace, but the words died away on my lips. My tongue was as enfeebled and powerless as the rest of my body. Though it was painful for me, still I was obliged to let Polycarp pull off all my clothes, even to my wet underlinen.

"He might turn round at least," my servant grumbled as he rolled me over from side to side like a small doll. "Tomorrow I'll give warning! Never again . . . for no amount of money! I, old fool, have had enough of this! May the devil take me if I remain any longer!"

The fresh warm linen did not warm or calm me. I trembled so much with rage and fear, that my very teeth chattered. My fear was inexplicable. I was not frightened by apparitions or by spectres risen from the grave, not even by the portrait of Pospelov, my predecessor, which was hanging just above my head. He never took his lifeless eyes off my face, and seemed to wink at me. But I was quite unaffected when I looked at him. My future was not brilliant, but all the same I could say with great probability that there was nothing that threatened me, that there were no black clouds near. Death was not to be expected soon; I had no terrible diseases, and I took no heed of personal misfortunes. . . . What did I fear, then, and why did my teeth chatter?

I could not even understand my wrath . .

The Count's "secret" could not have enraged me so greatly. I had nothing to do with the Count, nor with the marriage, which he had concealed from me.

It only remains to explain the condition of my soul at that time by fatigue and nervous derangement. That is the only explanation I can find.

When Polycarp left the room I covered myself up to the head and wanted to sleep. It was dark and quiet. The parrot moved about restlessly in its cage, and the regular ticking of the hanging clock in Polycarp's room could be heard through the wall. Peace and quiet reigned everywhere else. Physical and moral exhaustion overpowered me, and I began to doze. . . . I felt that a certain weight gradually fell from me, and hateful images melted into mist. . . . I remember I even began to dream. I dreamed that on a bright winter morning I was walking in the Nevsky of Petersburg, and, having nothing to do, looked into the shop windows. My heart was light and gay. . . . I had not to hurry anywhere, I had nothing to do, I was absolutely free. The consciousness that I was far from my village, from the Count's estate and from the cold and sullen lake made me feel all the more peaceful and gay. I stopped before one of the large windows and began to examine ladies' hats. The hats were familiar to me. . . . I had seen Olga in one of them, Nadia in another; a third I had seen on the day of the shooting party on the fair-haired head of that Zosia, who had arrived so unexpectedly. . . . Familiar faces smiled at me under the hats. . . . When I wanted to see

something to them they all three blended together into one large red face. This face moved its eyes angrily and stuck out its tongue. . . . Somebody pressed my neck from behind. . . .

"The husband killed his wife!" the red face shouted.

I shuddered, cried out, and jumped out of my bed as if I had been stung. I had terrible palpitations of the heart, a cold sweat came out on my brow.

"The husband killed his wife!" the parrot repeated again. "Give me some sugar! How stupid you are! Fool!"

"It was only the parrot!" I said to calm myself as I got into bed again. "Thank God!"

I heard a monotonous murmur. . . . It was the rain pattering on the roof. . . . The clouds I had seen when walking on the banks of the lake had now covered the whole sky. There were slight flashes of lightning that lighted up the portrait of the late Pospelov. . . . The thunder rumbled just over my bed. . . . ."

"The last thunderstorm of this summer," I thought.

I remembered one of the first storms. . . . Just the same sort of thunder had rumbled overhead in the forest the first time I was in the forester's house. . . . The "girl in red" and I were standing at the window then, looking out at the pine trees that were illuminated by the lightning. Dread shone in the eyes of that beautiful creature. She told me her mother had been killed by lightning, and that she herself was thirsting for an effective death. . . . She wanted to be dressed like the richest lady of the district. She understood that luxurious dress suited her beauty. And, conscious of her vain majesty, she wanted to mount to the top of the "Stone Grave" and there meet an effective death.

Her wish had . . . though not on the sto . . .*

Losing all hope of falling asleep, I rose and sat down on the bed. The quiet murmur of the rain gradually changed into the angry roar I was so fond of hearing when my soul was free from dread and wrath. . . . Now this roar appeared to me to be ominous. One clap of thunder succeeded the other without intermission.

"The husband killed his wife!" croaked the parrot.

Those were its last words. . . . Closing my eyes in pusillanimous fear, I groped my way in the dark to the cage and hurled it into a corner. . . .

"May the devil take you!" I cried, when I heard the clatter of the falling cage and the squeak of the parrot.

Poor, noble bird! That flight into the corner cost it dear. The next day the cage contained only a cold corpse. Why did I kill it? If its favourite phrase about a husband who kills his wife remin . . .†

My predecessor's mother when she gave up the lodging to me made me pay

* Here, unfortunately, there are again erasures. It is evident Kamyshev blotted out not at the time of writing but afterwards. At the end of the novel I will draw *special* attention to these erasures.—A. Ch.

† Here nearly a whole page is carelessly blotted out. Only a few words are spared, which give no clue to the meaning of what is obliterated.—A. Ch.

for the whole of the furniture, not excepting the photographs of people I did not know. But she did not take a kopeck from me for the expensive parrot. On the eve of her departure for Finland she passed the whole night taking leave of her noble bird. I remember the sobs and the lamentations that accompanied this leave-taking. I remember the tears she shed when asking me to take care of her friend until her return. I gave her my word of honour that her parrot would not regret having made my acquaintance. And I had not kept that word! I had killed the bird. I can imagine what the old woman would say if she knew of the fate of her screamer!

CHAPTER XXIII

A LETTER

Somebody tapped gently at my window. The little house in which I lived stood on the high road, and was one of the first houses in the village, and I often heard a tap at my window, especially in bad weather when a wayfarer sought a night's lodging. This time it was no wayfarer who knocked at my window. I went up to the window and waited there for a flash of lightning, when I saw the dark silhouette of a tall thin man. He was standing before the window and seemed to be shivering with cold. I opened the window.

"Who is there? What do you want?" I asked.

"Sergey Petrovich, it's I" I heard a plaintive voice, such as people who are starved with cold and fright. "It's I! I've come to you, dear friend!"

To my great astonishment, I recognized in the plaintive voice of the dark silhouette the voice of my friend Doctor Pavel Ivanovitch. This visit of "Screw's," who led a regular life and went to bed before twelve, was quite incomprehensible. What could have caused him to change his rules and appear at my house at two o'clock in the night, and in such weather too?"

"What do you want?" I asked, at the same time in the bottom of my heart sending this unexpected guest to the devil.

"Forgive me, golubchik. . . . I wanted to knock at the door, but your Polycarp is sure to be sleeping like a dead man now, so I decided to tap at the window."

"But what do you want?"

Pavel Ivanovich came close up to my window and mumbled something incomprehensible. He was trembling, and looked like a drunken man.

"I am listening!" I said, losing my patience.

"You . . . you are angry, I see; but . . . if you only knew all that has happened you would cease to be angry at your sleep being disturbed by visitors at an unseemly hour. It's no time for sleep now. Oh, my God, my God! I have lived in the world for thirty years, and to-day is the first time I am terribly unhappy! I am unhappy, Sergey Petrovich!"

"Ach! but what has happened? And what have I to do with it? I myself can scarcely stand on my legs. . . I can't be bothered about others!"

"Sergey Petrovich!" Screw said in a plaintive voice, stretching out towards my head his hand wet with rain, "Honest man! My friend!"

And then I heard a man crying. The doctor wept.

"Pavel Ivanovich, go home!" I said after a short silence. "I can't talk with you now. . . . I am afraid of my own mood, and of yours. We won't understand each other. . . ."

"My dear friend!" the doctor said in an imploring voice, "Marry her."

"You've gone mad!" I said, and banged the window to. . . .

First the parrot, then the doctor suffered from my mood. I did not ask him to come in, and I slammed the window in his face. Two rude and indecorous sallies for which I would have challenged anybody, even a woman, to a duel.* But meek and good-natured "Screw" had no idea about duels. He did not know what it is to be angry.

About two minutes later there was a flash of lightning, and glancing out of the window I saw the bent figure of my guest. His pose this time was one of supplication, of expectancy, the pose of a beggar watching for alms. He was probably waiting for me to pardon him, and to allow him to say what he had to communicate.

Fortunately my conscience was moved; I was sorry for myself, sorry that nature had implanted in me so much violence and meanness. My base soul as well as my healthy body were as hard as flint.*

I went to the window and opened it.

"Come into the room!" I said.

"Never! . . . Every minute is precious! Poor Nadia has poisoned herself, and the doctor cannot leave her side. . . . With difficulty we saved the poor thing. . . . Such a misfortune! And you don't want to hear it and slam the window to!"

"Still she is alive?"

"'Still'! . . . My good friend, that is not the way to speak about misfortunes! Who could have supposed that such a clever, honest nature would want to depart this life on account of such a creature as that Count? No, my friend, it is a misfortune for men that women cannot be perfect! However clever a woman may be, with whatever perfections she may be endowed, she has still a screw in her that prevents her and other people from living. . . . For instance, let us take Nadia. . . . Why did she do it? Self-love, nothing but self-love! Unhealthy self-love! In order to wound you she conceived the idea of marrying this Count. . . . She neither wanted his money nor his title . . . she only wanted to satisfy her monstrous self-

* The last sentence is written above some erased lines in which, however, one can decipher: "would have torn his head from his shoulders and broken all the windows."—A. Ch.

* Here follows a pretentiously-plastic explanation of the spiritual endurance of the author. The sight of human affliction, blood, post-mortem examinations, etc., etc., he maintains, produce no effect on him. The whole of this passage bears the imprint of boastful *naïveté* and insincerity. It astonishes by its coarseness, and I have deleted it. As a characterization of Kamyshev it has no importance.—A. Ch.

love. . . . Suddenly a failure! You know that *his* wife has arrived. . . . It appears that this debauchee is married. . . . And people say that women are more enduring, that they know how to suffer better than men! Where is there endurance here, when such a miserable cause makes them snatch up sulphur matches? This is not endurance, it is vanity!"

"You will catch cold. . . ."

"What I have just seen is worse than any cold. . . . Those eyes, that pallor. . . . Oh! To unsuccessful love, to the unsuccessful attempt to mortify you is now added unsuccessful suicide. . . . It is difficult to imagine greater misfortunes! . . . My dear fellow, if you have but a drop of compassion, if . . . if you would see her . . . Well, why should you not go to her? You love her! Even if you do not love her, why should you not sacrifice your leisure to her? Human life is precious, and for it one can give . . . all! Save her life!"

Somebody knocked loudly at my door. I shuddered. . . . My heart bled. . . . I do not believe in presentiments, but this time my alarm was not without cause. . . . Somebody was knocking at my door from without. . . .

"Who is there?" I cried out of the window.

"I come to beg your favour!"

"What do you want?"

"A letter from the Count, your Honour! There has been a murder!"

A dark figure muffled up in a sheepskin coat came to the window and, swearing at the weather, handed me a letter. . . . I hurried away from the window, lit a candle, and read the following: "For God's sake forget everything in the world and come at once!! Olga has been murdered. I have lost my head and am going mad.—Yours, A. K."

Olga murdered! My head grew dizzy, and it was black before my eyes, from this short phrase. . . . I sat down on the bed and my hands fell at my sides. I was unable to reason!

"Is that you, Pavel Ivanovich?" I heard the voice of the muzhik who had been sent to me ask. "I was just going to drive to you. . . . I have a letter for you, too."

Five minutes later "Screw" and I were driving in a closed carriage toward's the Count's estate. The rain rattled on the roof of the carriage, and the whole time there were blinding flashes of lightning in front of us.

CHAPTER XXIV

ACCURSED

We heard the roar of the lake. . . The last act of the drama was just beginning, and two of the actors were driving to see a harrowing sight.

"Well, and what do you think awaits us?" I asked dear Pavel Ivanovich.

"I can't imagine. . . . I don't know. . . ."

"I also don't know. . . ."

"Hamlet once regretted that the Lord of heaven and earth had forbidden the sin of suicide; in like manner I regret that fate has made me a doctor. . . I regret it deeply!"

"I fear that, in my turn, I must regret that I am an examining magistrate," I said. "If the Count has not made a mistake and confounded murder with suicide, and if Olga has really been

murdered, my poor nerves will have much to suffer!"

"You can refuse this affair!"

I looked inquiringly at Pavel Ivanovich, but, of course, owing to the darkness, I could see nothing. . . . How could he know that I could refuse this affair? I was Olga's lover, but who knew it, with the exception of Olga herself and perhaps also Pshekhotsky, who had favoured me once with applause?

"Why do you think I can refuse?" I asked "Screw."

"You could fall ill, or tender your resignation. All this is not dishonourable, because there is somebody to take your place. A doctor is placed in quite other conditions."

"Only that?" I thought.

Our carriage, after a long, wearisome drive over the clayey roads, stopped at last before the porch. Two windows just above the porch were brightly illuminated. Through the one on the right side, which was in Olga's room, a dim light issued. All the other windows looked like black spots. On the stairs we met the Scops-Owl. She looked at me with her piercing little eyes, and her wrinkled face became more wrinkled in an evil, mocking smile.

Her eyes seemed to say "You have a great surprise!"

She probably thought we had come to carouse, and we did not know there was grief in the house.

"Let me draw your attention to this," I said to Pavel Ivanovich, as I pulled the cap off the old woman's head and exposed her completely bare pate. "This old witch is ninety years old, my good soul. If some day you and I had to make a post-mortem examination of her, we should arrive at very different conclusions. You would find senile atrophy of the brain, and I would assure you that she was the cleverest and the most cunning creature in the whole district. . . . The devil in petticoats!"

I was astounded when I entered the ballroom. The picture I saw there was quite unexpected. All the chairs and sofas were occupied by people. . . . Groups of people were standing about in the corners and near the windows. . . . Where had they all come from? If anybody had told me I would meet these people there, I would have laughed at him. Their presence was so improbable and out of place in the Count's house at that time, when in one of the rooms Olga was either dying or already lying dead. They were the gipsy chorus of the chief gipsy Karpov from the restaurant "London"; the same chorus which is known to the reader from one of the first chapters of this book.

When I entered the room my old friend Tina, having recognized me, left one of the groups and came towards me with a cry of joy. A smile spread over her pale and dark complexioned cheeks when I gave her my hand, and tears rose to her eyes when she wanted to tell me something. . . . Tears prevented her from speaking, and I was not able to obtain a single word from her. I turned to the other gipsies, and they explained their presence in the house in this way. In the morning the Count had sent them a telegram demanding that the whole chorus should be at the Count's estate without fail by nine o'clock that evening. In execution of this order they had taken the train and had been in this hall by eight o'clock.

"We had thought to afford pleasure

to his Excellency and his guests. . . . We know so many new songs! . . .And suddenly. . . ."

"And suddenly a muzhik arrived on horseback, with the news that a brutal murder had been committed at the shooting party and with the order to prepare a bed for Olga Nikolaevna. The muzhik was not believed, because he was as drunk as a swine, but when a noise was heard on the stairs and a black figure was borne through the dancing hall, there was no more possibility to doubt. . . ."

"And now we don't know what to do! We can't remain here. . . . When the priest comes it is time for gay people to depart. . . . Besides, all the chorus girls are alarmed and crying. . . . They can't be in the same house with a corpse. . . . We must go away, but they won't give us horses! His Excellency the Count is lying ill in bed and will not see anybody, and the servants only laugh at us when we ask for horses. . . . How can we go on foot in such weather and on such a dark night? The servants are in general terribly rude! When we asked for a samovar for our ladies they sent us to the devil. . . ."

All these complaints ended in tearful requests to my magnanimity. Could I not obtain vehicles to enable them to depart from this "accursed" house?

"If the horses are not in the paddocks, and the coachmen have not been sent somewhere, you shall get away," I said. "I'll give the order. . . ."

The poor people, dressed out in their burlesque costumes, and accustomed to coquet with their swaggering manners, looked very awkward with their sober countenances and undecided poses. My promise to get them sent to the station somewhat encouraged them. The whispers of the men turned into loud talk, and the women ceased crying.

CHAPTER XXV

STARING WILDLY

THEN I went to the Count's study, and as I passed through a whole suite of dark, unlighted rooms, I looked into one of the numerous doors. I saw a touching picture. At a table near a boiling samovar Zosia and her brother Pshekhotsky were seated. . . . Zosia, dressed in a light blouse but still wearing the same bracelets and rings, was smelling at a scent bottle and sipping tea from her cup with fastidious languor. Her eyes were red with weeping. . . . Probably the occurrences at the shooting party had shaken her nerves very much, and had spoilt her frame of mind for a long time to come. Pshekhotsky, with his usual wooden face, was lapping up his tea in large gulps from the saucer and saying something to his sister. To judge from the mentor-like expression of his face, he was trying to calm her and persuade her not to cry.

I naturally found the Count with entirely shattered nerves. This puny and flabby man looked thinner and more fallen in than ever. . . . He was pale, and his lips trembled as if with ague. His head was tied up in a white pocket-handkerchief, which exhaled a strong odour of vinegar that filled the whole room. When I entered the room he jumped up from the sofa, on which he was lying, and rushed towards me wrapped up in the folds of his dressing-gown.

"Oh! oh!" he began, trembling and in a choking voice. "Well?"

And uttering some inarticulate sounds, he pulled me by the sleeve to the sofa and, waiting till I was seated, he pressed against me like a frightened dog and began to pour out all his grievances.

"Who could have expected it? Eh? Wait a moment, golubchik, I'll cover myself up with the plaid. . . . I have fever. . . . Murdered, poor thing! And how brutally murdered! She's still alive, but the village doctor says she'll die this night. . . . A terrible day! . . . She arrived without rhyme or reason, that . . . wife of mine . . . may the devil take her! . . . That was my most unfortunate mistake, Serezha; I was married in Petersburg when drunk. I hid it from you. I was ashamed of it, but there—she has arrived, and you can see her for yourself. . . . Look and be punished. . . . Oh, the accursed weakness! Under the influence of the moment and vodka, I'm capable of doing anything you like! The arrival of my wife is the first present, the scandal with Olga the second. . . . I'm expecting a third. . . . I know what will happen next. . . . I know! I'll go mad! . . ."

Having drunk three glasses of vodka and called himself an ass, a scoundrel and a drunkard, the Count began in a whimpering voice and a confused manner to describe the drama that had taken place at the shooting party. . . . What he told me was approximately the following: About twenty or thirty minutes after I had left, when the astonishment at Zosia's arrival had somewhat subsided, and when Zosia herself, having made acquaintance with the guests, began to play the part of hostess, the company suddenly heard a piercing, heartrending shriek. This shriek came from the forest and was repeated four times. It was so extraordinary that the people who heard it sprang to their feet, the dogs began to bark, and the horses pricked up their ears. The shriek was unnatural, but the Count was able to recognize in it a woman's voice. . . . There were notes of despair and terror in it. . . .

Women must shriek in that way when they see a ghost, or at the sudden death of a child. . . . The alarmed guests looked at the Count; the Count looked at them. . . . For about three minutes there was the silence of the grave.

While the ladies and gentlemen looked at each other, the coachmen and lackeys rushed towards the place from which the cry had come. The first messenger of grief was the old manservant, Il'ya. He ran back to the clearing from the forest, with a pale face, dilated pupils, and wanted to say something, but breathlessness and excitement prevented him from speaking. At last, overcoming his agitation, he crossed himself and said:

"The missis has been murdered!"

"What missis? Who had murdered her?"

But Il'ya made no reply to these questions. . . . The part of the second messenger fell to the lot of a man who was not expected and whose appearance caused general surprise. Both the sudden appearance and the look of this man were astonishing. . . . When the Count saw him, and remembered that Olga was walking about in the forest, his heart sank, and from a terrible presentiment his legs gave way under him.

It was Pëtr Egorych Urbenin, the

Count's former bailiff and Olga's husband. At first the company heard heavy footsteps and the cracking of brushwood. . . . It seemed as if a bear was making his way from the forest to the clearing. Then the heavy form of unfortunate Pëtr Egorych came in sight. When he came out of the forest and saw the company assembled on the clearing, he stepped back and stopped as if he were rooted to the ground. For about two minutes he remained silent and motionless, and in this way gave the people time to examine him properly. He had his usual grey jacket on and trousers that were already well worn. He was without a hat, and his matted hair stuck to his sweaty brow and temples. . . . His face, which was usually purple and often almost blue, was now quite pale. . . . His eyes looked around senselessly, staring wildly. . . . His hands and lips trembled. . . .

But what was the most astonishing and what instantly attracted the attention of the stupefied spectators were his blood-stained hands. . . . Both his hands and shirt cuffs were thickly covered with blood, as if they had been washed in a bath of blood.

Three minutes Urbenin remained dumbfounded, and then, as if awakening from a dream, he sat down on the grass cross-legged and groaned. The dogs, scenting something unwonted, surrounded him and raised a bark. . . . Having glanced round the assembled company with dim eyes, Urbenin covered his face with both hands and again there was silence. . . .

"Olga, Olga, what have you done!" he groaned.

Heartrending sobs were torn from his breast and shook his broad shoulders. . . . When he removed the hands from his face the whole company saw the marks of blood that they had left on his cheeks and forehead.

When he got to this place the Count waved his hands convulsively, seized a glass of vodka, drank it off, and continued:

"From that point my recollections become mixed. You can well understand all these events had so stunned me that I had lost the power of thinking. . . . I can remember nothing that happened afterwards! I only remember that the men brought some sort of a body in a torn, blood-stained dress out of the wood. . . . I could not look at it! They put it into a calash and drove off. . . . I did not hear either groans or weeping. . . . They say that the small dagger which she always carried about with her had been thrust into her side. . . . You remember it? I had given it to her. It was a blunt dagger—blunter than the edge of this glass. . . . What strength was necessary to plunge it in! Brother, I like Caucasian arms, but now may the deuce take all those arms! Tomorrow I will order them all to be thrown away."

The Count drank another glass of vodka and continued:

"But what a shame! What an abomination! We brought her to the house. . . . You can understand our despair, our horror, when suddenly, may the devil take all the gipsies, we heard gay singing! . . . They were all ranged in a row, singing at the top of their voices! . . . You see, they wanted to receive us with chic, but it turned out quite misplaced. . . . It was like Ivanushka-the-fool, who, meeting a funeral, became excited and shouted: "Pull away, you

can't pull it over!' Yes, brother! I wanted to entertain my guests and had ordered the gipsies, and what a muddle came of it! Not gipsies ought to have been sent for but doctors and priests. And now I don't know what to do! What am I to do? I don't know any of these formalities and customs. I don't know whom to call in, for whom to send. . . . Perhaps the police ought to come, the Public Prosecutor. . . . How the devil can I know? Thank goodness, Father Jeremiah, having heard about the scandal, came to give her the Communion. I should never have thought of sending for him. I implore you, dear friend, make all the necessary arrangements! By God, I'm going mad! The arrival of my wife, the murder . . . Brr! . . . Where is my wife now? Have you seen her?"

"I've seen her. She's drinking tea with Pshekhotsky."

"With her brother, you say. . . . Pshekhotsky, he's a rogue! When I ran away from Petersburg secretly, he found out about my flight and has stuck to me. What an amount of money he has been able to squeeze out of me during the whole of this time no one can calculate!"

I had not time to talk long to the Count. I rose and went to the door.

"Listen," the Count stopped me. "I say, Serezha . . . that Urbenin won't stab me?"

"Did he stab Olga, then?"

"To be sure, he . . . I can't understand, however, how he came there! What the deuce brought him to the forest? And why just to that forest? Admitting that he hid himself there and waited for us, but how could he know that I wanted to stop just in that place and not in any other?"

"You don't understand anything," I said. "By-the-by, once for all I must beg you. . . . If I undertake this case, please don't tell me your opinions. Have the goodness to answer my questions and nothing more."

CHAPTER XXVI

OLGA REFUSES

When I left the Count I went to the room where Olga was lying. . . .*

A little blue lamp was burning in the room and faintly lighted up her face. . . . It was impossible either to read or write by its light. Olga was lying on her bed, her head bandaged up. One could only see her pale sharp nose and the eyelids that closed her eyes. At the moment I entered the room her bosom was bared and the doctors were placing a bag of ice on it.† Olga was therefore still alive. Two doctors were attending on her. When I entered, Pavel Ivanovich, screwing up his eyes, was auscultating her heart with much panting and puffing.

The district doctor, who looked a worn-out and sickly man, was sitting pensively near the bed in an arm-chair and seemed to be feeling her pulse.

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* Here two lines are blotted out.
—A. Ch.

† I draw the reader's attention to a certain circumstance. Kamyshev, who loved on every occasion, even in his disputes with Polycarp, to descant on the condition of his soul, says not a word of the impression made on him by the sight of the dying Olga. I think this omission was intentional.—A. Ch.

Father Jeremiah, who had just finished his work, was wrapping up the cross in his stole and preparing to depart.

"Pëtr Egorych, do not grieve!" he said with a sigh and looked towards the corner of the room. "Everything is God's will. Turn for protection to God."

Urbenin was seated on a stool in a corner of the room. He was so much changed that I hardly recognized him. Want of work and drink during the last month had told as much on his clothes as on his appearance; his clothes were worn out, his face too.

The poor fellow sat there motionless, supporting his head on his fists and never taking his eyes off the bed. . . . His hands and face were still stained with blood. . . . He had forgotten to wash them. . . .

Oh, the prediction of my soul and of my poor bird!

Whenever the noble bird which I had killed screamed out his phrase about the husband who killed his wife, Urbenin's figure always arose before my mind's eye. Why? . . . I knew that jealous husbands often kill their unfaithful wives; at the same time I knew that such men as Urbenin do not kill people. . . . And I drove away the thought of the possibility of Olga being killed by her husband as something absurd.

"Was it he or not he?" I asked myself as I looked at his unhappy face.

And to speak candidly I did not give myself an affirmative answer, despite the Count's story and the blood I saw on his hands and face.

"If he had killed her he would have washed off that blood long ago," I said to myself, remembering the following proposition of a magistrate of my acquaintance: "A murderer cannot bear the blood of his victim."

If I had wished to tax my memory I could have remembered many aphorisms of a similar nature, but I must not anticipate or fill my mind with premature conclusions.

"My respects!" the district doctor said to me. "I am very glad you have come. . . . Please can you tell me who is master here?"

"There is no master. . . . Chaos reigns here," I answered.

"A very good apophthegm, but it does not assist me," the district doctor answered with bitterness. "For the last three hours I have been asking, imploring to have a bottle of port or champagne sent here and not a soul has deigned to listen to my prayer! They are all as deaf as posts! They have only just brought the ice I ordered three hours ago. What does it mean? A woman is dying here, and they only seem to laugh! The Count is pleased to sit in his study drinking liqueurs, and they can't bring even a wineglass here! I wanted to send to the chemist in the town, and I was told all the horses are worn out, and there's nobody who can go as they are all drunk. . . . I wanted to send to my hospital for medicines and bandages and they favoured me with a fellow who could hardly stand on his legs. I sent him two hours ago, and what do you think? They tell me he has only just started! Is that not disgusting? They're all drunk, rude, ill-bred! . . . They all seem idiots! By God, it is the first time in my life I've come across such heartless people!"

The doctor's indignation was justifiable. He had not exaggerated, rather

the contrary. . . . A whole night would have been too short a time for pouring out one's gall on all the disorders and malpractices that could be found on the Count's estate. The servants were all abominable, having been demoralized by the want of work and supervision. Among them there was not a single man-servant who could not have served as a type of a servant who had lived long and feathered his nest in the Count's service.

I went off to get some wine. Having distributed three or four cuffs, I succeeded in obtaining both champagne and Valerian drops, to the unspeakable delight of the doctors. An hour later* the doctor's assistant came from the hospital bringing with him all that was necessary.

Pavel Ivanovich succeeded in pouring into Olga's mouth a tablespoon of champagne. She made an effort to swallow and groaned. Then they injected some sort of drops under the skin.

"Olga Nikolaevna!" the district doctor shouted into her ear. "Olga Ni-ko-la-evna!"

"It is difficult to expect her to regain consciousness!" Pavel Ivanovich said with a sigh. "The loss of blood has been great, besides the blow she received on the head with some blunt instrument must have caused concussion of the brain."

It is not my business to decide if there had been concussion of the brain or not, but Olga opened her eyes and asked for something to drink. . . . The stimulants had had effect.

"Now you can ask her whatever you require . . ." Pavel Ivanovich said, nudging my elbow. "Ask."

I went up to the bed. Olga's eyes were turned on me.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"Olga Nikolaevna!" I began, "do you know me?"

During several seconds Olga looked at me and then closed her eyes.

"Yes!" she groaned. "Yes!"

"I am Zinov'ev, the examining magistrate. I had the honour of being acquainted with you, and if you remember, I was best man at your wedding. . . ."

"Is it thou?" Olga whispered, stretching out her left arm. "Sit down. . . ."

"She is delirious!" Screw sighed.

"I am Zinov'ev, the magistrate," I continued. "If you remember, I was at the shooting party. How do you feel?"

"Ask essential questions!" the district doctor whispered to me. "I cannot answer for the consciousness being lasting. . . ."

"I beg you not to teach me!" I said

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*I must draw the reader's attention to a very important circumstance. During from two to three hours M. Kamyshev only walks about from room to room, shares the doctor's indignation about the servants, boxes their ears to right and left, and so on. Can you recognize in him an examining magistrate? He evidently was in no hurry, and was only trying to kill time. Evidently he knew who the murderer was. Besides, there are the quite unnecessary searches made in the Scops-Owl's room and the examination of the gipsies, that appear more like banter than cross-questioning, and could only have been undertaken to pass the time.—A. Ch.

in an offended tone. "I know what I have to say. . . . Olga Nikolaevna," I continued, turning to her, "I beg you to remember the events of the past day. I will help you. . . . At one o'clock you mounted your horse and rode out with a large party to a shoot. . . . The shoot lasted for about four hours. . . . Then there was a halt on a clearing in the forest. . . . Do you remember?"

"And thou . . . and thou didst . . . kill . . ."

"The woodcock? After I had killed the wounded woodcock you frowned and went away from the rest of the party. . . . You went into the forest. . . .* Now try to collect all your strength and to exert your memory. During your walk in the wood you were assaulted by a person unknown to us. I ask you, as the examining magistrate, who was it?"

Olga opened her eyes and looked at me.

"Tell us the name of that man! There are three other persons in the room besides me. . . ."

Olga shook her head negatively.

"You must name him," I continued. "He will suffer a severe penalty. The law will make him pay dearly for his brutality! He will be sent to penal servitude.* . . . I am waiting."

Olga smiled and shook her head negatively. The further examination produced no results. I was not able to obtain another word from Olga, not a single movement. At a quarter to five she passed away.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHO WAS THE MURDERER?

About seven o'clock in the morning the village elder and his assistants, whom I had sent for, arrived from the village. It was impossible to drive to the scene of the crime: the rain that had begun in the night was still pouring down in buckets. Little puddles had become lakes. The grey sky looked gloomy, and there was no promise of sunlight. The soaked trees appeared dejected with their drooping branches, and sprinkled a whole shower of large drops at every gust of wind. It was impossible to go there. Besides, it might have been useless. The trace of the crime, such as bloodstains, human footprints, etc., had probably been washed away during the night. But the formalities demanded that the scene of the crime should be examined, and I deferred this visit until after the arrival of the police, and in the meantime I made out a draft of the official report of the case, and occupied myself with the examination

* This avoidance of questions of the first importance could only have had one object, to gain time and to await a loss of consciousness, when Olga would be unable to name the murderer. It is a characteristic process and it is astonishing that the doctors did not set the right value on it.—A. Ch.

*At the first glance all this appears naïve. It is evident Kamyshev wanted to make Olga understand what serious consequences her declaration would have for the murderer. If the murderer was dear to her, *ergo*, she must remain silent.
—A. Ch.

of witnesses. First of all I examined the gipsies. The poor singers had passed the whole night sitting up in the ball-rooms expecting to have horses given them to convey them to the station. But horses were not provided; the servants, when asked, only sent them to the devil, warning them at the same time that his Excellency had forbidden anybody to be admitted to him. They were also not given the samovar they asked for in the morning. The more than singular and indefinite position in which they found themselves in a strange house in which a corpse was lying, the uncertainty as to when they could get away, and the damp melancholy weather had driven the gipsies, both men and women, into such a state of distress that in one night they had become thin and pale. They wandered about from room to room, evidently much alarmed and expecting some serious issue. By my examination I only increased their anxiety. First because my lengthy examination delayed their departure from the accursed house indefinitely, and secondly it alarmed them. The simple people, imagining that they were seriously suspected of the murder, began to assure me with tears in their eyes, that they were not guilty and knew nothing about the matter. Tina, seeing me as an official personage, quite forgot our former connexion, and while speaking to me trembled and almost fainted with fright like a whipped little girl. In reply to my request not to be excited, and my assurance that I saw in them nothing but witnesses, the assistants of justice, they informed me in one voice that they had never been witnesses, that they knew nothing, and that they trusted that in future God would deliver them from all close acquaintance with judicial people.

I asked them by what road they had driven from the station, had they not passed through that part of the forest where the murder had been committed, had any member of their party quitted it for even a short time, and had they not heard Olga's heartrending shriek.* This examination led to nothing. The gipsies, alarmed by it, only sent two members of the chorus to the village to hire vehicles. The poor people wanted terribly to get away. For their misfortune there was already much talk in the village about the murder in the forest, and these swarthy messengers were looked at with suspicion; they were arrested and brought to me. It was only towards evening that the harassed chorus was able to get free from this nightmare and breathe freely, as having hired five peasants' carts at three times the proper fare, they drove away from the Count's house. Afterwards they were paid for their visit, but nobody paid them for the moral suffering that they had endured in the Count's apartments. . . .

Having examined them, I made a search in the Scops-Owl's room.† In her trunks I found quantities of all

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* If all this was necessary for M. Kamyshev, would it not have been easier to question the coachmen who had driven the gipsies?—A. Ch.

† Why? We can admit that all this was done by the examining magistrate in a drunken or sleepy condition, but why write about it? Would it not have been better to hide from the reader these gross mistakes?—A. Ch.

sorts of old woman's rubbish, but although I looked through all the old caps and darned stockings, I found neither money nor valuables that the old woman had stolen from the Count or his guests. . . . Nor did I find the things that had been stolen from Tina some time before. . . . Evidently the old witch had another hiding-place only known to herself.

I will not give here the preliminary report I drafted about the information I had obtained or the searches I had made. . . . It was long; besides, I have forgotten most of it. I will only give a general idea of it. First of all I described the condition in which I found Olga, and I gave an account of every detail of my examination of her. By this examination it was evident that Olga was quite conscious when she answered me and purposely concealed the name of the murderer. She did not *want* that the murderer should suffer the penalty, and this inevitably led to the supposition that the criminal was near and dear to her.

The examination of her clothes, which I made together with the commissary of the rural police who arrived very soon, produced very much. . . . The jacket of her riding habit, made of velvet with a silk lining, was still moist. The right side in which there was the hole made by the dagger was saturated with blood and in places bore marks of clotted blood. . . . The loss of blood had been very great, and it was astonishing that Olga had not died on the spot. The left side was also blood-stained. The left sleeve was torn at the shoulder and at the wrist. . . . The two upper buttons were torn off, and at our examination we did not find them. The skirt of the riding habit, made of black cashmere, was found to be terribly crumpled; it had been crumpled when they had carried Olga out of the wood to the vehicle and from the vehicle to her bed. Then it had been pulled off, rolled into a disorderly heap, and flung under the bed. It was torn at the waistband. This tear was about ten inches long and in the length, and had probably been made while she was being carried or when it was pulled off; it might also have been made during her lifetime. Olga, who did not like mending, and not knowing to whom to give the habit to be mended, might have hidden away the tear under her bodice. I don't think any signs could be seen in this of the savage rage of the criminal, on which the assistant public prosecutor laid such special emphasis in his speech at the trial. The right side of the belt and the right-hand pocket were saturated with blood. The pocket-handkerchief and the gloves, that were in this pocket, were like two formless lumps of a rusty colour. The whole of the riding-habit, to the very end of the skirt, was bespattered with spots of blood of various forms and sizes. . . . Most of them, as it was afterwards explained, were the impressions of the blood-stained fingers and palms belonging to the coachmen and lackeys who had carried Olga. . . . The chemise was bloody, especially on the right side of which there was a hole produced by the cut of an instrument. There, as also on the left shoulder of the bodice, and near the wrists there were rents, and the wristband was almost torn off.

The things that Olga had worn, such as her gold watch, a long gold chain, a diamond brooch, ear-rings, rings and a

purse containing silver coins, were found with the clothes. It was clear the crime had not been committed with the intent of robbery.

The results of the post-mortem examination, made by "Screw" and the district doctor in my presence on the day after Olga's death, were set down in a very long report, of which I give here only a general outline. The doctors found that the external injuries were as follows: on the left side of the head, at the juncture of the temporal and the parietal bones, there was a wound of about one and a half inches in length that went as far as the bone. The edges of the wound were not smooth nor rectilinear. . . . It had been inflicted by a blunt instrument, probably as we subsequently decided by the haft of the dagger. On the neck at the level of the lower cervical vertebræ a red line was visible that had the form of a semicircle and extended across the back half of the neck. On the whole length of this line there were injuries to the skin and slight bruises. On the left arm, an inch and a half above the wrist, four blue spots were found. One was on the back of the hand and the three others on the lower side. They were caused by pressure, probably of fingers. . . . This was confirmed by the little scratch made by a nail that was visible on one spot. The reader will remember that the place where these spots were found corresponds with the place where the left sleeve and the left cuff of the bodice of the riding habit were torn. . . . Between the fourth and fifth ribs on an imaginary vertical line drawn from the centre of the armpit there was a large gaping wound of an inch in length. The edges were smooth, as if cut and steeped with liquid and clotted blood. . . . The wound was deep. . . . It was made by a sharp instrument, and as it appeared from the preliminary information, by the dagger which exactly corresponded in width with the size of the wound.

The interior examination gave as result a wound in the right lung and the pleura, inflammation of the lung and hæmmorrhage in the cavity of the pleura.

As far as I can remember, the doctors arrived approximately at the following conclusion: (*a*) death was caused by anæmia consequent on a great loss of blood; the loss of blood was explained by the presence of a gaping wound on the right side of the breast. (*b*) the wound on the head must be considered a serious injury, and the wound in the breast as undoubtedly mortal; the latter must be reckoned as the immediate cause of death. (*c*) the wound on the head was given with a blunt instrument; the wound in the breast by a sharp and probably a double-edged one. (*d*) the deceased could not have inflicted all the above-mentioned injuries upon herself with her own hand; and (*e*) there probably had been no offence against feminine honour.

In order not to put it off till Doomsday and then repeat myself, I will give the reader at once the picture of the murder I sketched while under the impression of the first inspections, two or three examinations, and the perusal of the report of the post-mortem examination.

Olga, having left the rest of the party, walked about the wood. Lost in a reverie or plunged in her own sad thoughts—the reader will remember her

mood on that ill-fated evening—she wandered deep into the forest. There she was met by the murderer. When she was standing under a tree, occupied with her own thoughts, the man came up and spoke to her. . . . This man did not awaken suspicions in her, otherwise she would have called for help, but that cry would not have been heart-rending. While talking to her the murderer seized hold of her left arm with such strength that he tore the sleeve of her bodice and her chemise and left a mark in the form of four spots. It was at that moment probably that she shrieked, and this was the shriek heard by the party. . . . She shrieked from pain and evidently because she read in the face and movements of the murderer what his intentions were. Either wishing that she should not shriek again, or perhaps acting under the influence of wrathful feelings, he seized the breast of her dress near the collar, which is proved by the two upper buttons that were torn off and the red line the doctors found on her body. The murderer in clutching at her breast and shaking her, had tightened the gold watch-chain she wore round her neck. . . . The friction and the pressure of the chain produced the red line. Then the murderer dealt her a blow on the head with some blunt weapon, for example, a stick or even the scabbard of the dagger that hung from Olga's girdle. Then flying into a passion, or finding that one wound was insufficient, he drew the dagger and plunged it into her right side with force—I say with force, because the dagger was blunt.

This was the gloomy aspect of the picture that I had the right to draw on the strength of the above-mentioned data. The question who was the murderer was evidently not difficult to determine and seemed to resolve itself. First the murderer was not guided by covetous motives but something else. . . . Therefore it was impossible to suspect some wandering vagabond or ragamuffin, who might be fishing in the lake. The shriek of his victim could not have disarmed a robber: to take off the brooch and the watch was the work of a second.

Secondly, Olga had purposely not told me the name of the murderer, which she would not have done if the murderer had been a common robber. Evidently the murderer was dear to her, and she did not wish that he should suffer severe punishment on her account. . . . Such people could only have been her mad father; her husband, whom she did not love, but before whom she felt herself guilty; or the Count, to whom perhaps in her soul she felt under obligations. . . . Her mad father was sitting at home in his little house in the forest on the evening of the murder, as his servant affirmed afterwards, composing a letter to the chief of the district police, requesting him to overcome the imaginary robbers who surrounded his house day and night. . . . The Count had never left his guests before and at the moment the murder was committed. Therefore, the whole weight of suspicion fell on unfortunate Urbenin. His unexpected appearance, his mien, and all the rest could only serve as good evidence.

Thirdly, during the last months Olga's life had been one continuous romance. And this romance was of the sort that usually ends with crime and capital punishment. An old, doting husband,

unfaithfulness, jealousy, blows, flight to the lover-Count, two months after the marriage. . . . If the beautiful heroine of such a romance is killed, do not look for robbers or rascals, but search for the heroes of the romance. On this third count the most suitable hero-murderer was again Urbenin.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHY HANDS BLOOD-STAINED?

I MADE the preliminary examinations in the mosaic room in which I had loved at one time to loll on the soft divan and pay court to gipsies.

The first person I examined was Urbenin. He was brought to me from Olga's room, where he continued to sit on a stool in a corner and never removed his eyes from the empty bed. . . . For a moment he stood before me in silence, looking at me with indifference, then probably thinking that I wanted to speak to him in my character of examining magistrate, he said in the tired voice of a man who was broken by grief and anguish.

"Sergei Petrovich, examine the other witnesses first, please, and me afterwards. . . . I can't . . ."

Urbenin considered himself a witness, or thought that he would be considered one. . . .

"No, I require to examine you just now," I said. "Be seated, please. . . ."

Urbenin sat down opposite to me and bent his head. He was weary and ill, he answered reluctantly, and it was only with difficulty I was able to squeeze his deposition out of him.

He deposed that he was Pëtr Egorych Urbenin, nobleman, fifty years of age, belonging to the Orthodox Faith. That he owned an estate in the neighbouring K—— district where he belonged to the electorate, and had served for the last triennials as honorary magistrate. Being ruined, he had mortgaged his estate and had considered it necessary to go into service. He had entered the Count's service as bailiff six years ago. Liking agriculture, he was not ashamed of being in the service of a private individual, and considered that it was only the foolish who were ashamed of work. He received his salary from the Count regularly, and he had nothing to complain of. He had a son and daughter from his first marriage, etc., etc., etc.

He had married Olga because he was passionately in love with her. He had struggled long and painfully with his feelings, but neither common sense nor the logic of a practical elderly mind—in fact, nothing had effect: he was obliged to succumb to his feelings and he got married. He knew that Olga did not marry him for love, but considering her to be moral in the highest degree, he decided to content himself with her faithfulness and friendship which he had hoped to merit.

When he had come to the place where his disenchantment and the wrongs done to his grey hairs began, Urbenin asked permission not to speak of "the past which God will forgive her" or at least to defer the conversation about that to a future time.

"I can't. . . . It's hard. . . . Besides, you yourself saw it."

"Very well, let us leave it for another time. . . . Only tell me now, did you beat your wife? It is reported that one day, finding a note from the Count in her possession, you struck her. . . ."

"That is not true. . . . I only seized

her by the arm, she began to cry, and that same evening she went to complain. . . ."

"Did you know of her connexion with the Count?"

"I have begged that this subject should be deferred. . . . And what is the use of it?"

"Answer me only this one question, which is of great importance. . . . Was your wife's connexion with the Count known to you?"

"Undoubtedly. . . ."

"I shall write that down, and all the rest concerning your wife's unfaithfulness can be left for the next time. . . . Now we shall revert to another question. Will you explain to me how it came that you were in the forest where Olga Nikolaevna was murdered? . . . You were as you say, in the town. . . . How did you appear in the forest?"

"Yes, sir, I had been living in town with a cousin ever since I lost my place. . . . I passed my time in looking for a place and in drinking to forget my sorrows. . . . I had been drinking specially hard this last month. For example, I can't remember what happened last week as I was always drunk. . . . The day before yesterday I got drunk too. . . . In a word I am lost. . . . Irremediably lost! . . ."

"You wanted to tell me how it was that you appeared yesterday in the forest?"

"Yes, sir. . . . I awoke yesterday morning early, about four o'clock. . . . My head was aching from the previous day's drink, I had pains in all my limbs as if I had fever. . . . I lay on my bed and saw through the window the sun rise, and I remembered . . . many things. . . . A weight was on my heart. . . . Suddenly I wanted to see her . . . to see her once more, perhaps for the last time. I was seized by wrath and melancholy. . . . I drew from my pocket the hundred-rouble note the Count had sent me. I looked at it, and then trampled it underfoot. . . . I trampled on it till I decided to go and fling this charity into his face. However hungry and ragged I may be, I cannot sell my honour, and every attempt to buy it I consider a personal insult. So you see, sir, I wanted to have a look at Olga and fling the money into the ugly mug of that seducer. And this longing overpowered me to such an extent that I almost went out of my mind. I had no money to drive here; I could not spend *his* hundred roubles on myself. I started on foot. By good luck a muzhik I know overtook me, and drove me eighteen versts for ten kopecks, otherwise I might still have been trudging along. The muzhik set me down in Tenevo. From there I came here on foot and arrived about four o'clock.

"Did anybody see you here at that time?"

"Yes, sir. The watchman, Nikolai, was sitting at the gate and told me the masters were not at home, they had all gone out shooting. I was almost worn out with fatigue, but the desire to see my wife was stronger than my pains. I had to go on foot without a moment's rest to the place where they were shooting. I did not go by the road, but started through the forest. I know every tree, and it would be as difficult for me to lose myself in the Count's forests as it would be in my own house."

"But going through the forest and not by the road you might have missed the shooting party."

"No, sir, I kept so close to the road all the time that I could not only hear the shots but the conversations too."

"Consequently you did not expect to meet your wife in the forest?"

Urbenin looked at me with astonishment, and, after thinking for a short time, he replied:

"Pardon me, but that is a strange question. One can't expect to meet a wolf, and to expect a terrible misfortune is equally impossible. God sends them unexpectedly. For example, this dreadful occurrence. . . . I was walking through the Ol'khovsky wood, not expecting any grief because I have grief enough as it is, when suddenly I heard a strange shriek. That shriek was so piercing that it appeared to me as if somebody had cut into my ear. . . . I ran towards the cry. . . ."

Urbenin's mouth was drawn to one side, his chin trembled, his eyes blinked, and he began to sob.

"I ran towards the cry, and suddenly I saw . . . Olga lying on the ground. Her hair and forehead were bloody, her face terrible. I began to shout, to call her by her name. . . . She did not move. . . . I kissed her, I raised her up. . . ."

Urbenin choked and covered his face with his hands. After a minute he continued:

"I did not see the scoundrel . . . When I was running towards her I heard somebody's hasty footsteps. He was probably running away."

"All this is an excellent invention, Pëtr Egorych," I said. "But do you know magistrates have little belief in such rare occurrences as the coincidence of the murder with your accidental walk, etc. It's not badly invented, but it explains very little."

"What do you mean by invented?" Urbenin asked, opening his eyes wide. "I have invented nothing, sir. . . ."

Suddenly Urbenin got very red and rose.

"It appears that you suspect me. . . ." he mumbled. "Of course, anybody can suspect, but you, Sergei Petrovich, have known me long. . . . It's a sin for you to brand me with such a suspicion. . . . But you know me."

"I know you, certainly . . . but my private opinion is here of no avail. . . . The law reserves the right of private opinion for the jurymen, the examining magistrate has only to deal with evidence. There is much evidence, Pëtr Egorych."

Urbenin cast an alarmed look at me and shrugged his shoulders.

"Whatever the evidence may be," he said, "you must understand. . . . Now, could I? . . . I! Besides whom?! I might be able to kill a quail or a woodcock, but a human being . . . a woman who was dearer to me than life, my salvation . . . the very thought of whom illuminates my gloomy nature like the sun. . . . And suddenly you suspect me!"

Urbenin waved his hand resignedly and sat down again.

"As it is, I long for death, and you wrong me besides! If an unknown functionary wronged me, I'd say nothing, but you, Sergei Petrovich! . . . May I go away, sir?"

"You may. . . . I shall examine you again to-morrow, and in the meantime, Pëtr Egorych, I must put you under arrest. . . . I hope that before to-morrow's examination you will have had

time to appreciate the importance of all the evidence there is against you, and you will not waste time uselessly, but confess. I am convinced that Olka Nikolaevna was murdered by you. . . . I have nothing more to say to you to-day. . . . You may go."

Having said this I bent over my papers. . . . Urbenin looked at me in perplexity, rose, and stretched out his arms in a strange way.

"Are you joking . . . or serious?" he asked.

"This is no time for joking," I said. "You may go."

Urbenin remained standing before me. I looked up at him. He was pale and looked with perplexity at my papers.

"Why are your hands blood-stained, Pëtr Egorych?" I asked.

He looked down at his hands on which there still were marks of blood, and he moved his fingers.

"Why there is blood? . . . Hm . . . If this is part of the evidence, it is but poor evidence. . . . When I lifted up blood-stained Olga I could not help dirtying my hands with blood. I was not wearing gloves."

"You just told me that when you found your wife all bloody, you called for help. . . . How is it that nobody heard your cries?"

"I don't know, I was so stunned by the sight of Olia, that I was unable to cry aloud. . . . Besides, I know nothing. . . . It is useless for me to try to exculpate myself, and it's not in my principles to do so."

"You would hardly have shouted. . . . Having killed your wife, you ran away, and were terribly astonished when you saw people on the clearing."

"I never noticed your people. I paid no heed to people."

With this my examination for that day was concluded. After that Urbenin was confined in one of the outhouses on the Count's estate and watched.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

On the second or third day the Assistant Public Prosecutor, Polugradov, arrived post-haste from the town; he is a man I cannot think of without spoiling my frame of mind. Imagine a tall, lean man, of about thirty, clean shaven, smartly dressed, and with hair curled like a sheep's; his features were thin, but so dry and unexpressive that it was not difficult to guess the emptiness and foppishness of the individual to whom they belonged; his voice was low, sugary, and mawkishly polite.

He arrived early in the morning, with two portmanteaux in a hired calash. First of all he inquired with a very concerned face, complaining affectedly of fatigue, if a room had been prepared for him in the Count's house. By my orders a small but very cosy and light room had been assigned to him, where everything he might need, beginning with a marble washstand, and ending with matches, had been arranged.

"I—I say, my good fellow! Bring me some hot water!" he began while settling down in his room, and fastidiously sniffing the air; "Some hot water, please, I say, young man!"

Before beginning work he washed, dressed, and arranged his hair for a long time; he even brushed his teeth with some sort of red powder, and occupied

about three minutes in trimming his sharp, pink nails.

"Well, sir," he said at last, settling down to work, and turning over the leaves of our report. "What's it all about?"

I told him what was the matter, not leaving out a single detail. . . .

"Have you been to the scene of the crime?"

"No, I have not been there yet."

The Assistant Public Prosecutor frowned, passed his white womanish hand over his freshly washed brow, and began walking about the room.

"I can't understand your reason for not having been there," he mumbled. "I should suppose that was the first thing that ought to have been done. Did you forget or thought it unnecessary?"

"Neither the one nor the other: yesterday I waited for the police, and intend to go to-day."

"Now nothing remains there: it has rained all these days, and you have given the criminal time to obliterate his traces. Of course you placed a guard at the spot? No? I don't understand!"

And the dandy shrugged his shoulders authoritatively.

"You'd better drink your tea, it's getting cold," I said, in a tone of indifference.

"I like it cold."

The Assistant of the Public Prosecutor bent over the papers, and with a loud sniff he began to read aloud in an undertone, occasionally jotting down his remarks and corrections. Two or three times his mouth was drawn to one side in a sarcastic smile: for some reason neither my official report nor the doctors' pleased this cunning rogue.* In this sleek, well-brushed, and cleanly-washed government official, stuffed full of conceit and a high opinion of his own worth, the pedant was clearly apparent.

By midday we were on the scene of the crime. It was raining hard. Of course we neither found spots nor traces; all had been washed away by the rain. By some chance I found one of the buttons that were missing on Olga's riding habit, and the Assistant Prosecutor picked up a sort of reddish pulp, that subsequently proved to be a red wrapper from a packet of tobacco. At first we stumbled upon a bush which had two twigs broken at one side. The Assistant Prosecutor was delighted at finding these twigs. They might have been broken by the criminal and would therefore indicate the way he had gone after killing Olga. But the joy of the Prosecutor was unfounded: we soon found a number of bushes with twigs and nibbled leaves; it turned out that a herd of cattle had passed over the scene of the murder.

After making a plan of the place and questioning the coachmen we had taken with us as to the position in which they had found Olga we returned to the house with long faces. An onlooker might have noticed a certain laziness and apathy in our movements while we were examining the scene of the crime. . . . Perhaps our move-

* Kamyshev abuses the Assistant Public Prosecutor quite without cause. The only thing in which this prosecutor can be blamed is that his face did not please M. Kamyshev. It would have been more honest to admit inexperience or intentional mistakes.—A. Ch.

ments were paralysed to a certain extent by the conviction that the criminal was already in our hands, and therefore it was unnecessary to enter on any Lecoq-like analysis.

On his return from the forest Polugradov again passed a long time in washing and dressing, and he again called for hot water. Having finished his toilet he expressed a wish to examine Urbenin once more. Poor Pëtr Egorych had nothing new to tell us at this examination; as before he denied his guilt, and thought nothing of our evidence.

"I am astonished that I can be suspected," he said, shrugging his shoulders: "Strange!"

"My good fellow, don't play the *naïf*," Polugradov said to him. "Nobody is suspected without cause, and if somebody is suspected there is good cause for it!"

"Whatever the causes may be, however strong the evidence may be, one must reason in a humane manner! Don't you understand, I can't murder? I can't . . . Consequently what is your evidence worth?"

"Well!" and the Assistant Prosecutor waved his hand: "what a trouble these educated criminals are; one can make a muzhik understand, but try to talk to one of these! 'I can't' . . . 'in a humane manner' . . . there they go strumming on psychology!"

"I am no criminal," Urbenin said quite offended, "I beg you to be more careful in your expressions. . . ."

"Hold your tongue, my good fellow! We have no time to apologize nor to listen to your dissatisfaction. . . . If you don't wish to confess, you need not confess, but allow us to consider you a liar. . . ."

"As you like," Urbenin grumbled. "You can do with me what you like now. . . . You have the power. . . ."

Urbenin made a gesture of indifference, and continued to look out of the window.

"Besides, it's all the same to me: my life is lost."

"Listen to me, Pëtr Egorych," I said, "yesterday and the day before you were so overcome by grief, that you were scarcely able to keep on your legs, and you were hardly able to give more than laconic answers; to-day, on the contrary, you have such a blooming, of course, only comparatively blooming, and gay appearance, and even strike out into idle talk. Usually sorrowful people have no wish to talk, while you not only launch out into long conversations, but even make all sorts of trivial complaints. In what way can such a sudden change be explained?"

"And how do you explain it?" Urbenin asked, screwing up his eyes at me in a derisive manner.

"I explain it in this way: that you have forgotten your part. It is difficult to act for any length of time; one either forgets one's part, or it bores one. . . ."

"Consequently, that was all an invention," said Urbenin, smiling; "and it does honour to your perspicacity. . . . Yes, you are right; a great change has taken place in me. . . ."

"Can you explain it to us?"

"Certainly, I see no cause for hiding it. Yesterday I was so entirely broken and oppressed by my grief, that I thought of taking my life . . . of going mad . . . but this night I thought better of it . . . the thought entered my

mind that death had saved Olia from a life of depravity, that it had torn her out of the dirty hands of that good-for-nothing who has ruined me; I am not jealous of death; it is better for Olga to belong to death, than to the Count. This thought cheered and strengthened me: now there is no longer the same weight on my soul."

"Cleverly invented," Polugradov murmured under his breath, as he sat swinging his leg, "he is never at a loss for an answer!"

"I feel that I am speaking the truth, and I can't understand that you cultivated men cannot see the difference between truth and dissimulation! However, prejudice is too strong a feeling; under its influence it is difficult not to err; I can understand your position, I can imagine what will be, when trusting in your evidence, I am brought up for trial. . . . I can imagine how, taking into consideration my brutal physiognomy, my drunkenness . . . My physiognomy is not brutal, but prejudice will have its own. . . ."

"Very well, very well, enough," Polugradov said, bending over his papers, "Go!" . . ."

After Urbenin had left, we proceeded to examine the Count. His Excellency was pleased to come to the examination in his dressing-gown, with a vinegar bandage on his head; having been introduced to Polugradov he sank into an armchair, and began to give his evidence:

"I shall tell you everything from the very beginning. . . . Well, and how is your President Lionsky, getting on? Has he still not divorced his wife? I made his acquaintance in Petersburg, quite by chance. . . . Gentlemen, why don't you order something to be brought? Somehow it's jollier to talk with a glass of cognac before you. . . . I have not the slightest doubt that Urbenin committed this murder."

And the Count told us all that the reader already knows. At the request of the prosecutor he told us all the details of his life with Olga, and described the delights of living with a beautiful woman, and was so carried away by his subject, that he smacked his lips, and winked several times. From his evidence I learned a very important detail that is unknown to the reader. I learned that Urbenin while living in the town had constantly bombarded the Count with letters; in some letters he cursed him, in others he implored him to return his wife to him, promising to forget all wrongs, and dishonour; the poor devil caught at these letters like a drowning man catches at straws.

The Assistant Prosecutor examined two or three of the coachmen and then, having had a very good dinner, he gave me a long list of instructions, and drove away. Before leaving he went into the adjoining house where Urbenin was confined, and told him that our suspicions of his guilt had become certainties. Urbenin only shrugged his shoulders, and asked permission to be present at his wife's funeral; this permission was granted him.

Polugradov did not lie to Urbenin: yes, our suspicions had become convictions, we were convinced that we knew who the criminal was, and that he was already in our hands; but this conviction did not abide with us for long! . . .

CHAPTER XXX

THEY LIE!

ONE fine morning, just as I was sealing up a parcel which I was about to send by the guard, who was to take Urbenin to the town, where he was to be imprisoned in the castle-prison, I heard a terrible noise. Looking out of the window I saw an amusing sight: some dozen strong young fellows were dragging one-eyed Kuz'ma out of the servants' kitchen.

Kuz'ma pale and dishevelled had his feet firmly planted on the ground, and being deprived of the use of his arms, butted at his adversaries with his large head.

"Your Honour, please go there!" Il'ya said to me, in great alarm, "he . . . does not want to some!"

"Who does not want to come?"

"The murderer."

"What murderer?"

"Kuz'ma. . . . He committed the murder, your Honour . . . Pëtr Egorych is suffering unjustly. . . . By God, sir."

I went into the yard and walked towards the servants' kitchen, where Kuz'ma, who had torn himself out of the strong arms of his opponents, was administering cuffs to right and left.

"What's the matter?" I asked, when I came up to the crowd.

And I was told something very strange and unexpected.

"Your Honour, Kuz'ma killed her!"

"They lie!" Kuz'ma shouted. "May God kill me if they don't lie!"

"But why did you, son of a devil, wash off the blood, if your conscience is clear? Stop a moment, his Honour will examine all this!"

The breaker-in, Trifon, riding past the river, saw Kuz'ma washing something carefully in the water. At first Trifon thought he was washing linen, but looking more attentively he saw it was a poddevka and a waistcoat. He thought this strange: garments of cloth are not washed.

"What are you doing?" Trifon called to him.

Kuz'ma became confused. Looking more attentively Trifon noticed brown spots on the poddevka.

"I guessed at once that it must be blood . . . I went into the kitchen and told our people; they watched, and saw him at night hanging out the poddevka to dry. Of course they took fright. Why should he wash it, if he is not guilty? He must have something on his soul, he is trying to hide. . . . We thought and thought, and decided to bring him to your Honour. . . . We pull him along, and he backs and spits into our eyes. Why should he back if he is not guilty?"

From further examination it appeared that just before the murder, at the time when the Count and his guests were sitting in the clearing, drinking tea, Kuz'ma had gone into the forest. He had not aided in carrying Olga, and therefore could not have got dirtied with blood at that time.

When he was brought to my room Kuz'ma was so excited that at first he could not utter a word; turning up the white of his single eye he crossed himself and mumbled oaths.

"Be calm; tell me what you know and I will let you go," I said to him.

Kuz'ma fell at my feet, stammered and called on God.

"May I perish if it's I. . . . May

neither my father nor my mother. . . . Your Honour! May God destroy my soul. . . ."

"You went into the forest?"

"That's quite true, sir, I went. . . . I had served cognac to the guests and, forgive me, I had tippled a little; it went to my head, and I wanted to lie down; I went, lay down, and fell asleep. . . . But who killed her, or how I don't know, so help me God. . . . It's the truth I'm telling you!"

"But why did you wash off the blood?"

"I was afraid that people might imagine . . . that I might be taken as a witness. . . ."

"How did the blood come on to your poddevka?"

"I don't know, your Honour."

"How is is possible you can't know? Isn't the poddevka yours?"

"Yes, certainly it's mine, but I don't know: I saw the blood when I woke up again."

"So, then, I suppose you dirtied the poddevka with blood in your sleep?"

"Just so. . . ."

"Well, my man, go and think it over. . . . You're talking nonsense; think well and tell me to-morrow. . . . Go!"

The following morning, when I awoke, I was informed that Kuz'ma wanted to speak to me. I ordered him to be brought in.

"Have you bethought yourself?" I asked him.

"Just so, I've bethought myself. . . ."

"How did the blood get on your poddevka?"

"Your Honour, I remember as if in a dream: I remember something, as in a fog, but if it is true or not I can't say."

"What do you remember?"

Kuz'ma turned up his eye, thought, and said:

"Extraordinary . . . it's like in a dream or a fog. . . . I lay upon the grass drunk and dozing. I was not quite asleep. . . . I only heard somebody was passing, trampling heavily with his feet. . . . I opened my eyes and saw, as if I was unconscious, or in a dream; a gentleman came up to me, he bends over me and wiped his hands in my skirts. . . . he wiped them in my poddevka, and then rubbed his hand on my waistcoat. . . . so."

"What gentleman was it?"

"I don't know; I only remember it was not a muzhik, but a gentleman. . . . in gentleman's clothes; but what gentleman it was, what sort of face he had I can't remember at all."

"What was the colour of his clothes?"

"Who can say! Perhaps it was white, perhaps black. . . . I only remember it was a gentleman, and that's all I can remember. . . . Akh, yes, I can remember! When he bent down and wiped his hands he said: 'Drunken swine!"

"You dreamt this?"

"I don't know . . . perhaps I dreamt it. . . . But then where did the blood come from?"

"Was the gentleman you saw like Pëtr Egorych?"

"It appears to me he wasn't . . . but perhaps it was. . . . but he would not swear and call people swine."

"Try to remember. . . . Go, sit down and think. . . .Perhaps you may succeed in remembering."

"I'll try."

CHAPTER XXXI

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

THIS unexpected eruption of one-eyed Kuz'ma into the almost finished romance produced an entanglement that it was scarcely possible to unravel. I was quite bewildered, and did not know how I was to understand Kuz'ma. He denied positively any guilt; besides, the preliminary investigations were against his guilt. Olga had been murdered not from motives of greed, according to the doctors "it was probable" that no attempt against her honour had been made; it was only possible to admit that Kuz'ma had killed her and had not availed himself of one of these reasons because he was very drunk and had lost his reasoning powers. All this did not tally with the setting of the murder.

But if Kuz'ma was not guilty, why had he not explained the presence of blood on his poddevka, and why had he invented dreams and hallucinations? Why had he implicated this gentleman, whom he had seen and heard, but had forgotten so entirely that he could not even remember the colour of his clothes?

Polugradov hurried back post haste.

"Now you see, sir!" he said, "if you had examined the scene of the crime at once, believe me all would have been plain now, as plain as a pikestaff! If you had examined all the servants at once, we could then have known who had carried Olga Nikolaevna and who had not. And now we can't even find out at what distance from the scene of the crime this drunkard was lying!"

He cross-questioned Kuz'ma for about two hours, but could get nothing new out of him; he only said that while half asleep he had seen a gentleman, that the gentleman had wiped his hands on the skirts of his poddevka and had sworn at him as a "drunken swine," but he could not say who this gentleman was, nor what his face and clothes were like.

"How much cognac did you drink?"

"I finished half a bottle."

"Perhaps it was not cognac?"

"No, sir, it was real fine champagne."

"So you even know the names of wines!" the Assistant Prosecutor said laughing.

"How should I not know them? I've served these masters for more than thirty years, thank God? I've had time to learn. . . ."

For some reason the Assistant Prosecutor required that Kuz'ma should be confronted with Urbenin. . . . Kuz'ma looked for a long time at Urbenin, shook his head and said

"No, I can't remember . . . perhaps it was Pëtr Egorych, perhaps it was not. . . . Who can say?"

Polugradov shrugged his shoulders and drove away, leaving me to choose which was the right one of the two murderers.

The investigations were protracted. . . . Urbenin and Kuz'ma were imprisoned in the guard-house of the village in which I lived. Poor Pëtr Egorych lost courage very much; he grew thin and grey and fell into a religious mood; two or three times he sent to beg me to let him see the laws about punishments; it was evident he was interested in the extent of the punishment that awaited him.

"What will become of my children?" he asked me at one of the examinations

"If I were alone your mistake would not grieve me very much; but I must live . . . live for the children! They will perish without me. Besides, I . . . I am not able to part from them! What are you doing with me?"

When the guards said "thou" to him, and when he had to go a couple of times, from my village to the town and back on foot under escort, in the sight of all the people who knew him, he became despondent and nervous.

"These are not jurists," he cried so that he was heard in the whole of the guard-house. "They are nothing but cruel, heartless boys, without mercy either for people or truth! I know why I am confined here, I know it! By casting the blame on me they want to hide the real culprit! The Count killed her; and if it was not the Count, it was his hireling!"

When he heard that Kuz'ma had been arrested, he was at first very pleased.

"Now the hireling has been found!" he said to me. "Now he's been found!"

But soon, when he saw he was not released and when he was informed of Kuz'ma's testimony, he again became depressed.

"Now I'm lost," he said, "definitely lost. In order to get out of prison this one-eyed devil will be sure sooner or later to name me and say it was I who wiped my hands in his skirts. But you yourself saw that my hands had not been wiped!"

Sooner or later our suspicions would have to be elucidated.

About the end of November of that year, when snow began to drift before my windows and the lake looked like an endless white desert, Kuz'ma wanted to see me; he sent the guard to me to say he had "bethought himself." I ordered him to be brought to me.

"I am very pleased that you have at last bethought yourself," I greeted him. "It is high time to finish with this dissembling and this leading us all by the nose like little children. Well, of what have you bethought yourself?"

Kuz'ma did not answer; he stood in the middle of my room in silence, staring at me without winking. . . . Fright shone in his eyes; his whole person showed signs of great fright; he was pale and trembling, and a cold perspiration poured down his face.

"Well, speak! What have you remembered?" I asked again.

"Something, so extraordinary, that nothing can be more wonderful," he said. "Yesterday I remembered what sort of a tie that gentleman was wearing, and this night I was thinking and remembered his face."

"Then who was it?"

"I'm afraid to say, your Honour; allow me not to speak: it's too strange and wonderful; I think I must have dreamt it or imagined it. . . ."

"Well, what have you imagined?"

"No, allow me not to speak. If I tell you, you'll condemn me. . . . Allow me to think, and I'll tell you to-morrow. Fearful!"

"Pshaw!" I began to get angry. "Why did you trouble me if you can't speak? Why did you come here?"

"I thought I would tell you, but now I'm afraid. No, your Honour, please let me go. . . . I'd better tell you to-morrow. . . . If I tell you you'll get so angry that I'd sooner go to Siberia—you'll condemn me. . . ."

I got angry and ordered Kuz'ma * to be taken away. In the evening of that very day, in order not to lose time and to put an end to this tiresome "case about the murder," I went to the guard-house and cheated Urbenin by telling him that Kuz'ma had named him as the murderer.

"I expected it," Urbenin said with a wave of his hand. "It's all one to me. . . ."

Solitary confinement had greatly affected Urbenin' health; he had grown yellow and had lost almost half his weight. I promised him to order the guards to allow him to walk about the corridors in the day and even in the night.

"There's no fear of your trying to escape," I said.

Urbenin thanked me, and after my departure he walked about the corridor; his door was no longer kept locked.

On leaving him I knocked at the door behind which Kuz'ma was seated.

"Well, have you bethought yourself yet?" I asked.

"No, sir," a weak voice answered. "Let the Prosecutor come; I will tell him, but I won't tell you."

"As you like!"

The next morning all was settled.

The watchman Egor came running to me and informed me that one-eyed Kuz'ma had been found in his bed dead! I hastened to the guard-house to assure myself of the fact. The strong, big muzhik, who but the day before was full of health and in order to get free had invented all sorts of tales, was as stark and cold as a stone. . . . I will not stop to describe the horror the guards and I felt; it will be understood by the reader. Kuz'ma was precious for me both as accuser and as witness; for the warders he was a prisoner for whose death or flight they would be severely punished. . . . Our horror was only increased when at the post-mortem examination it was discovered that he had died a violent death. . . . Kuz'ma had died from suffocation. . . . Once convinced that he had been suffocated, I began to search for the culprit, and I had not to search long. . . . He was near. . . .

"You scoundrel! It was not enough for you to kill your wife," I said, "but you must take the life of the man who convicted you! And you continue to act your dirty, roguish comedy!"

Urbenin grew deadly pale and began to shake. . . .

"You lie!" he cried, striking himself on the breast with his fist.

"I do not lie! You shed crocodile tears at our evidence and made game of it. . . . There were moments when I almost wished to believe you more than our evidence. . . . Oh, you are a good actor! . . . But now I won't believe you, even should blood flow from your eyes instead of these play-actor's false tears! Say that you killed Kuz'ma!"

"You are either drunk or are laughing at me! Sergei Petrovich, all pa-

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* A fine examining magistrate! Instead of continuing the examination and extorting the necessary evidence, he gets angry—an occupation that does not enter into the duties of an official. Besides, I put little trust in all this. . . . Even if M. Kamyshev cared so little about his duties, simple, human curiosity ought to have obliged him to continue the examination.—A. Ch.

ience and submissiveness has its limits; I can bear this no longer!"

And Urbenin, with flashing eyes, struck the table with his clenched fist.

"Yesterday I had the imprudence to give you more liberty," I continued, "by allowing you that which no other prisoner is allowed, to walk about the corridors. And now it appears, out of gratitude you went to the door of that unfortunate Kuz'ma and suffocated a sleeping man! Do you know that you have destroyed not only Kuz'ma; the warders will also be ruined on your account."

"What have I done, good God?" Urbenin said, seizing hold of his head.

"Do you want the proofs? I will give them. . . . By my orders your door was left open. . . . The foolish warders opened the door and forgot to hide the lock. . . . All the cells are opened with the same key. . . . In the night you took your key and going into the corridor, you opened your neighbour's door with it. . . . Having smothered him, you locked the door and put the key into your own lock."

"Why should I smother him? Why?"

"Because he denounced you. . . . If yesterday I had not given you this news, he would have been alive now. . . . It is sinful and shameful, Pëtr Egorych!"

"Sergei Petrovich, young man," the murderer suddenly said in a soft, tender voice, seizing me by the hand, "you are an honest and respectable man! Do not ruin and stain yourself with false suspicions and over-hasty accusations! You cannot understand how cruelly and painfully you have wounded me by casting upon my soul, which is in no way guilty, a new accusation. . . . I am a martyr, Sergei Petrovich! Fear to wrong a martyr! The time will come when you will have to beg my pardon, and that time will be soon. . . . You can't really want to accuse me! But this pardon will not satisfy you. . . . Instead of assailing me so terribly with insults, it would have been better if in a humane—I will not say a friendly—way (you have already renounced all friendly relations) you had questioned me. . . . As a witness and your assistant, I would have brought more profit to justice than in the role of the accused. If we even take this new accusation . . . I could tell you much. I did not sleep last night, and heard everything."

"What did you hear?"

"Last night, at about two o'clock . . . all was dark. . . . I heard somebody walking about the corridor very gently, and constantly touching my door . . . he walked and walked, and then opened my door and came in."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know; it was dark—I did not see. . . . He stood for about a minute and went away again . . . exactly as you said. . . . He took the key out of my door and opened the next cell. Two minutes later I heard a guttural sound and then a bustle. I thought it was the warder walking about and bustling, and the sounds I took for snores, otherwise I would have made a noise."

"Fables," I said. "There was nobody here but you who could have killed Kuz'ma. The warders were all asleep. The wife of one of them, who could not sleep the whole night, has given evidence that all three warders slept like dead men all the night and never

left their beds for a minute; the poor fellows did not know that such brutes could be found in this miserable guard-house. They have been serving here for more than twenty years, and during all that time they have never had a single case of a prisoner having escaped, to say nothing of such an abomination as a murder. Now, thanks to you, their life has been turned upside down; I, too, will have to suffer on your account because I did not send you to the town prison, and even gave you the liberty of walking about the corridors. Thank you!"

This was my last conversation with Urbenin. I never spoke to him again, if I do not count the two or three answers I gave to the questions he put to me when he was seated in the dock.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE RAINBOW

I HAVE said that my novel is a story of crime, and now, when the case of the murder of Olga Urbenin is complicated by another murder, in many ways mysterious and incomprehensible, the reader is entitled to expect that the novel will enter upon its most interesting and exciting phase. The discovery of the criminal, and the reasons for his crime, offer a wide field for the display of ingenuity and sharp-wittedness. Here evil will and cunning are at war with knowledge and skill, a war that is interesting in all its manifestations. . . .

I led the war and the reader has the right to expect me to describe the means that led to my victory, and he is doubtless expecting all sorts of detective finesses such as shine in the novels of Gaboriau and our Shklyarevsky; and I am ready to satisfy th reader's expectations, but . . . one o the chief characters leaves the field o battle without waiting for the end o the combat—he is not made a partic pator in the victory; all that he ha done so far was lost for him—and h goes over into the crowd of spectator That character in the drama is you humble servant. On the day followin the above conversation with Urbenin received an invitation, or, more co rectly speaking, an order to hand in m resignation. The tittle-tattle and tal of our district gossips had done i work. . . . The murder in the guar house, the evidence that the Assista Prosecutor had collected, unknown me, from the servants, and, if the read still remembers it, the blow I had dea a muzhik on the head with an oar o the occasion of one of our form revels, had all greatly contributed my dismissal. The muzhik started th case. All sorts of alterations took plac In the course of two days I had to har over the case of the murder to th magistrate for specially important a fairs.

Thanks to the talk and the newspap reports, the entire attention of th Prosecutor was aroused. The Pros cutor himself came to the Count's e tate every other day and assisted at t examinations. The official reports our doctors were sent to the medic board and higher. There was even question of having the bodies exhum and having a fresh post-mortem exa ination, which, by the way, would ha led to nothing.

Urbenin was taken a couple of tim to the chief town of the government have his mental capacities tested. a

oth times he was found quite normal. was given the part of witness.* The ew examining magistrates were so car- ied away by their zeal that even my olycarp was called up as witness.

A year after my resignation, when I as living in Moscow, I received a ummons to appear at the trial of the rbenin case. I was glad of the oppor- unity of seeing again the places to hich I was drawn by habit, and I ent. The Count, who was residing in etersburg, did not go there, but sent medical certificate instead.

The case was tried in our district own in a division of the Court of Jus- ice. Polugradov—that same Polugra- ov who cleaned his teeth four times a ay with red powder—conducted the rosecution; a certain Smirnyaev, a tall, ean, fair-haired man with a sentimental ace and long straight hair, acted for he defence. The jury was exclusively omposed of shopkeepers and peasants, f whom only four could read and rite; the others, when they were given o read Urbenin's letters to his wife, weated and got confused. The chief uryman was Ivan Dem'yanych, the hopkeeper from my village, after hom my late parrot had been named.

When I came into the court I did ot recognize Urbenin; he had become uite grey, and his body had grown wenty years older. I had expected to ead on his face indifference for his ate and apathy, but I was mistaken. rbenin was deeply interested in the trial; he brought in an exception against three of the jurymen, gave long explanations, and questioned the witnesses; he absolutely denied any guilt, and he questioned all the witnesses, who did not give evidence in his favour, very minutely.

The witness Pshekhotsky deposed that I had had a connexion with the late Olga.

"That's a lie!" Urbenin shouted. "He lies! I don't trust my wife, but I trust him!"

When I gave my evidence the counsel for the defence asked me in what relations I stood to Olga, and informed me of the evidence that Pshekhotsky, who had on one occasion applauded me, had given. To have spoken the truth would have been to give evidence in favour of the accused. The more depraved the wife, the more lenient the jury is towards the Othello-husband. I understood this. . . . On the other hand, if I spoke the truth I would have wounded Urbenin. . . . In hearing it he would have felt an incurable pain. . . . I thought it better to lie.

I said "No."

In his speech the Public Prosecutor described Olga's murder in vivid colours and drew especial attention to the brutality of the murderer, to his malignancy. . . . "An old, worn-out voluptuary saw a girl, young and pretty. Knowing the whole horror of her position in the house of her mad father, he enticed her to come to him by a bit of bread, a dwelling, and some bright-coloured rags. . . . She agreed. An old, well-to-do husband is easier to be borne than a mad father and poverty. But she was young, and youth, gentlemen of the jury, possesses its own in

*A part that was certainly better uited to M. Kamyshev than the part f examining magistrate; in the Ur- enin case he could not be examining agistrate.—A. Ch.

alienable rights. . . . A girl brought up on novels, in the midst of nature, sooner or later was bound to fall in love. . . ." And so on in the same style. It finished up with "He who had not given her anything more than his age and bright coloured rags, seeing his prize slipping away from him, falls into the fury of a brute, to whose nose a red-hot iron had been applied. He had loved in a brutish way and he must hate in a brutish way," etc., etc.

In charging Urbenin with Kuz'ma's murder, Polugradov drew special attention to those thief-like processes, well thought out and weighed, that accomplished the murder of a "sleeping man who the day before had had the imprudence to give testimony against him." "I suppose you cannot doubt that Kuz'ma wanted to tell the Public Prosecutor something specially concerning him."

The counsel for the defence, Smirnyaev, did not deny Urbenin's guilt; he only begged them to admit that Urbenin had acted under the influence of a state of temporary insanity, and to have indulgence for him. When describing how painfully the feelings of jealousy are, he cited as an example Shakespeare's "Othello." He looked at that all-human type from every side, giving extracts from various critics, and got into such a maze that the presiding judge had to stop him with the remark that "a knowledge of foreign literature was not obligatory for the jurymen."

Taking advantage of having the last word, Urbenin called God to witness that he was not guilty either in deed or thought.

"It is all the same to me where I am—in this district where everything reminds me of my unmerited shame and of my wife, or in penal servitude; but it is the fate of my children that is troubling me."

And, turning to the public, Urbenin began to cry, and begged that his children might be cared for.

"Take them. The Count will not lose the opportunity of vaunting his generosity, but I have already warned the children; they will not accept a crumb from him."

Then, noticing me among the public, he looked at me with suppliant eyes and said:

"Defend my children from the Count's favours!"

He apparently had quite forgotten the impending verdict, and his thoughts were only centred on his children. He talked about them until he was stopped by the presiding judge.

The jury were not long in consultation. Urbenin was found guilty, without extenuating circumstances on any count.

He was condemned to the loss of all civil rights, transportation and hard labour for fifteen years.

So dearly had he to pay for his having met on a fine May morning the poetical "girl in red."

More than eight years have passed since the events described above happened. Some of the actors in the drama are dead and decomposed, others are bearing the punishment of their sins, others are wearily dragging on life struggling with dullness and awaiting death from day to day.

Much is changed during these eight years. . . . Count Karnéev, who has

never ceased to entertain the sincerest friendship for me, has sunk into utter drunkenness. His estate which was the scene of the drama has passed from him into the hands of his wife and Pshekhotsky. He is now poor, and is supported by me. Sometimes of an evening, lying on the sofa in my room in the boarding-house, he likes to remember the good old times.

"It would be fine to listen to the gipsies now!" he murmurs. "Serezha, send for some cognac!"

I am also changed. My strength is gradually deserting me, and I feel youth and health leaving my body. I no longer possess the same physical strength, I have not the same alertness, the same endurance which I was proud of displaying formerly, when I could carouse night after night and could drink quantities which now I could hardly lift.

Wrinkles are appearing on my face one after the other; my hair is getting thin, my voice is becoming coarse and less strong. . . . Life is finished.

I remember the past as if it were yesterday. I see places and people's faces as if in a mist. I have not the power to regard them impartially; I love and hate them with the former intensity, and never a day passes that I, being filled with feelings of indignation or hatred, do not seize hold of my head. As formerly, I consider the Count odious, Olga infamous, Kalinin ludicrous owing to his stupid presumption. Evil I hold to be evil, sin to be sin.

But not infrequently there are moments when, looking intently at a portrait that is standing on my writing-table, I feel an irresistible desire to walk with the "girl in red" through the forest, under the sounds of the tall pines, and to press her to my breast regardless of everything. In such moments I forgive the lies, the fall into the dirty abyss, I am ready to forgive everything, if only a small part of the past could be repeated once more. . . . Wearied of the dullness of town, I want to hear once again the roar of the giant lake and gallop along its banks on my Zorka. . . . I would forgive and forget everything if I could once again go along the road to Tenevo and meet the gardener Franz with his vodka barrel and jockey-cap. . . . There are moments when I am even ready to press the blood-stained hand of good-natured Pëtr Egorych, and talk with him about religion, the harvest and the enlightenment of the people. . . . I would like to meet "Screw" and his Nadenka again. . . .

Life is mad, licentious, turbulent—like a lake on an August night. . . . Many victims have disappeared for ever beneath its dark waves. . . . Heavy dregs lie at the bottom.

But why, at certain moments, do I love it? Why do I forgive it, and in my soul hurry towards it like an affectionate son, like a bird released from a cage?

At this moment the life I see from the window of my room in these chambers reminds me of a grey circle; it is grey in colour without any light or shade. . . .

But, if I close my eyes and remember the past, I see a rainbow formed by the sun's spectrum. . . . Yes, it is stormy there, but it is lighter too. . . .

—S. Zinov'ev.

POSTSCRIPT

At the bottom of the manuscript there is written:

DEAR SIR, MR. EDITOR! I beg you to publish the novel (or story, if you prefer it) which I submit to you herewith, as far as possible, in its entirety, without abridgment, cuts or additions. However, changes can be made with the consent of the author. In case you find it unsuitable I beg you to keep the MSS. to be returned. My address (temporary) is Moscow in the Anglia Chambers, on the Tverskoy Ivan Petrovich Kamyshev. P.S.—The fee is at the discretion of the Editor.

Year and date.

Now that the reader has become acquainted with Kamyshev's novel, I will continue my interrupted talk with him. First of all, I must inform the reader that the promise I made to him in the beginning of this novel has not been kept: Kamyshev's novel has not been printed without omissions, not *in toto*, as I promised, but it is considerably shortened. The fact is, that the "Shooting Party" could not be printed in the newspaper which was mentioned in the first chapter of this work, the newspaper ceased to exist when the manuscript was sent to press. The present editorial board, in accepting Kamyshev's novel, found it impossible to publish it without cuts. During the time it was appearing, every chapter that was sent to me in proof was accompanied by the request to "make changes." However, not wishing to take on my soul the sin of changing another man's work, I found it better and m profitable to leave out whole passa rather than to make changes of uns able places. With my assent the ed left out many places that shocked their cynicism, length, or the carel ness of their literary style. These om sions and cuts demanded both care time, which is the cause that ma chapters were late. Among other p sages we left out two descriptions nocturnal orgies. One of these or took place in the Count's house, other on the lake. We also left ou description of Polycarp's library and the original manner in which he re this passage was found too much dra out and exaggerated.

The chapter I stood up for most all and which the editor chiefly disli was one in which the desperate c gambling that was the rage among Count's servants was minutely scribed. The most passionate gamb were the gardener Franz and the woman nicknamed the Scops-Owl. W Kamyshev was conducting the inve gations he passed by one of the summ houses, and looking in he saw mad p going on; the players were the Sc Owl, Franz and—Pshekhotsky. T were playing "Stukolka," at twe kopeck points and a fine that reac thirty roubles. Kamyshev joined players and "cleared them out" a they had been partridges. Franz, had lost everything but wished to tinue, went to the island where he hidden his money. Kamyshev follo him, marked where he had conce his money, and afterwards robbed gardener, not leaving a kopeck in hoard. The money he had taken gave to the fisherman Mikhey.

strange charity admirably characterizes this hare-brained magistrate, but it is written so carelessly and the conversation of the gamblers glitters with such pearls of obscenity that the editor would not even consent to have alterations made.

The description of certain meetings of Olga and Kamyshev are omitted; an explanation between him and Nadenka Kalinin, etc., etc., are also left out. But I think what is printed is sufficient to characterize my hero. *Sapienti sat.* . . .

Exactly three months later the doorkeeper Andrey announced the arrival of the gentleman "with the cockade."

"Ask him in!" I said.

Kamyshev entered, the same rosy-cheeked, handsome and healthy man he had been three months before. His steps, as formerly, were noiseless. . . . He put down his hat on the window with so much care that one might have imagined that he had deposited something heavy. . . . Out of his eyes there shone, as before, something childlike and infinitely good-natured.

"I am again troubling you!" he began smiling, and he sat down carefully. "For God's sake, forgive me! Well, what? What sentence has been passed on my manuscript?"

"Guilty, but deserving of indulgence," I replied.

Kamyshev laughed and blew his nose in a scented handkerchief.

"Consequently, banishment into the flames of the fireplace?" he asked.

"No, why such strictness? It does not merit punitive measures; we will employ a corrective treatment."

"Must it be corrected?"

"Yes, certain things. . . . by mutual consent. . . ."

We were silent for a quarter of a minute. I had terrible palpitations of the heart and my temples throbbed, but to show that I was agitated did not enter into my plans.

"By mutual consent," I repeated. "Last time you told me that you had taken the subject of your novel from real occurrences."

"Yes, and I am ready to confirm it now. If you have read my novel, may I have the honour of introducing myself as Zinov'ef."

"Consequently, you were best-man at Olga Nikolaevna's wedding."

"Both best-man and friend of the house. Am I not sympathetic in this manuscript?" Kamyshev laughed, stroked his knees and got very red. "A fine fellow, eh? I ought to have been flogged, but there was nobody to do it."

"So, sir. . . . I liked your novel: it is better and more interesting than most novels of crimes. Only by mutual consent you and I must make some essential changes in it."

"That's possible. For example, what do you consider requires change?"

"The very *habitus* of the novel, its character. It has, as in all novels treating of crimes, everything: crime, evidence, an inquest, even fifteen years' penal servitude as a dessert, but the most essential thing is lacking."

"What is that?"

"The real culprit is not in it. . . ."

Kamyshev made large eyes and rose.

"Candidly speaking, I don't understand you," he said after a short pause. "If you do not consider the man who commits murder and strangles a real culprit, then. . . . I don't know who

ought to be considered culpable. Criminals are, of course, the product of society, and society is guilty, but . . . if one is to devote oneself to the higher considerations one must cease writing novels and write reports."

"Akh, what sort of higher considerations are there here! It was not Urbenin who committed the murder!"

"How so?" Kamyshev asked, approaching nearer to me.

"Not Urbenin!"

"Perhaps. *Errare humanum est*—and magistrates are not perfect: there are often errors of justice under the moon. You consider that we were mistaken?"

No, you did not make a mistake; you wished to make a mistake."

"Forgive me, I again do not understand," and Kamyshev smiled: "If you find that the inquest led to a mistake, and even, if I understand you right, to a premeditated mistake, it would be interesting to know your point of view. Who was the murderer in your opinion?"

"You!"

Kamyshev looked at me with astonishment, almost with terror, grew very red and stepped back. Then turning away, he went to the window and began to laugh.

"Here's a nice go!" he muttered, breathing on the glass and nervously drawing figures on it.

I watched his hand as he drew, and it appeared to me that I recognized in it the only iron, muscular hand that, with a single effort, would have been able to strangle sleeping Kuz'ma, or mangle Olga's frail body. The thought that I saw before me a murderer filled my soul with unwonted feelings of horror and fear . . . not for myself—no!—but for him, for this handsome and graceful giant . . . in general for man. . . .

"You murdered them!" I repeated.

"If you are not joking, allow me to congratulate you on the discovery," Kamyshev said laughing, but still not looking at me: "However, judging by your trembling voice, and your paleness, it is difficult to suppose that you are joking. What a nervous man you are!"

Kamyshev turned his flushed face towards me and, forcing himself to smile, he continued:

"It is interesting how such an idea could have come into your head! Have I written something like that in my novel? By God, that's interesting. . . Tell me, please! It really is interesting once in a lifetime to try what it feels like to be looked upon as a murderer."

"You are a murderer," I said, "and you are not able to hide it. In the novel you lied, and now you are proving yourself but a poor actor."

"This is really quite interesting; upon my word, it would be curious to hear. . . ."

"If you are curious, then listen."

I jumped up and began walking about the room in great agitation. Kamyshev looked out of the door and closed it tight. By this precaution he gave himself away.

"What are you afraid of?" I asked.

Kamyshev became confused, coughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not afraid of anything, I only . . . only looked—looked out of the door. So you wanted this too! Well, now tell me!"

"May I put you some questions?"

"As many as you like."

"I warn you that I am no magistrate, and I am no master in cross-examination; do not expect order or system, and therefore please do not disconcert or puzzle me. First tell me where you disappeared after you had left the clearing on which the shooting party was feasting?"

"In the novel it is mentioned: I went home."

"In the novel the description of the way you went is carefully effaced. Did you not go through the forest?"

"Yes."

"Consequently, you could have met Olga?"

"Yes, I could," Kamyshev said smiling.

"And you met her."

"No, I did not meet her."

"In your investigations you forgot to question one very important witness, and that was yourself. . . . Did you hear the shriek of the victim?"

"No. . . . Well, baten'ka, you don't know how to cross-examine at all."

This familiar baten'ka jarred on me; it accorded but ill with the apologies and the disconcertion with which our conversation had begun. Soon I noticed that Kamyshev looked upon me with condescension,—from above—and almost with admiration of my inexperience in extricating myself from the number of questions that were troubling me.

"Let us admit that you did not meet Olga in the forest," I continued, "though it was more difficult for Urbenin to meet Olga than for you, as Urbenin did not know she was in the forest, and, therefore, did not look for her, while you, being drunk and maddened, would probably have looked for her. You certainly did look for her, otherwise what would be your object in going home through the forest instead of by the road? . . . But let us admit that you did not meet her. . . . How is your gloomy, your almost mad frame of mind, in the evening of the ill-fated day, to be explained? What induced you to kill the parrot, who cried out about the husband who killed his wife? I think he reminded you of your own evil deed. That night you were summoned to the Count's house, and instead of beginning your investigations at once, you delayed until the police arrived almost four and twenty hours later, and you yourself probably never noticed it. . . . Only those magistrates who already know who the criminal is can delay in that way. . . . The criminal was known to you. . . . Further,—Olga did not mention the name of the murderer because he was dear to her. . . . If her husband had been the murderer she would have named him. If she had been capable of informing against him to her lover the Count, it would not have cost her anything to accuse him of murder: she did not love him, and he was not dear to her. . . . She loved you, and it was just you, who were dear to her . . . she wanted to spare you. . . . Allow me to ask why did you delay asking her a straight question when she regained consciousness for a moment? Why did you ask her all sorts of questions that had nothing to do with the matter? Allow me to think you did this only to mark time, in order to prevent her from naming you. Then Olga dies. . . . In your novel you do not say a word about the impression that her death made on you. . . . In this I see cau-

tion: you do not forget to write about the number of glasses you emptied, but such an important event as the death of 'the girl in red' passes in the novel without leaving any traces. . . . Why?"

"Go on, go on. . . ."

"You made all your investigations in a most slovenly way. . . . It is hard to admit, that you, a clever and very cunning man, did not do so purposely. All your investigations remind one of a letter that is purposely written with grammatical errors. The exaggeration gives you away. . . . Why did you not examine the scene of the crime? Not because you forgot to do so, or considered it unimportant, but because you waited for the rain to wash away your traces. You write little about the examination of the servants. Consequently, Kuz'ma was not examined by you until he was caught washing his poddevka. . . . You evidently had no cause to mix him up in the affair. Why did you not question any of the guests, who had been feasting with you on the clearing? They had seen the blood stains on Urbenin, and had heard Olga's shriek,—they ought to have been examined. But you did not do it, because one of them might have remembered at his examination, that shortly before the murder you had suddenly gone into the forest and been lost. Afterwards they probably were questioned, but this circumstance had already been forgotten by them. . . ."

"Cute!" Kamyshev said, rubbing his hands; go on, go on!"

"Is it possible that what has already been said is not enough for you? To prove conclusively that Olga was murdered by you, and no other, I must remind you that you were her lover, whom she had jilted for a man you despised! A husband can kill from jealously. I presume a lover can do so too. . . . Now let us advert to Kuz'ma. . . . To judge by his last interrogation, that took place on the eve of his death, he had you in his mind; you had wiped your hands on his poddevka, and you had called him a swine. . . . If it had not been you, why did you interrupt your examination at the most interesting point? Why did you not ask about the colour of the murderer's necktie, when Kuz'ma had informed you he had remembered what the colour of his necktie was? Why did you give Urbenin liberty just when Kuz'ma remembered the name of the murderer? Why not before or after? It was evident you required a man who might walk about the corridors at night. . . . And so you killed Kuz'ma, fearing that he would denounce you."

"Well, enough!" Kamyshev said laughing. "That will do! You are in such a passion, and have grown so pale that it seems as if at any moment you might faint. Do not continue. You are right. I really did kill them."

This was followed by a silence. I paced the room from corner to corner Kamyshev did the same.

"I killed them!" Kamyshev continued. "You have caught the secret by the tail,—it's your good luck. Not many will have that success. Most of your readers will abuse Urbenin, and be amazed at my magisterial cleverness and acumen."

At that moment my assistant came into my office and interrupted our conversation. Noticing that I was occupied and excited he hovered for a moment around my writing-table, looked

at Kamyshev, and left the room. When he had gone Kamyshev went to the window and began to breathe on the glass.

"Eight years have passed since then," he began again, after a short silence, "and for eight years I have borne this secret with me. But such a secret and live blood are incompatible in the same organism; it is impossible to know without punishment what the rest of mankind does not know. For all these eight years I have felt myself a martyr. It was not my conscience that tormented me, no! Conscience is a thing apart . . . and I don't pay much attention to it. It can easily be stifled by reasoning about its expansibility. When reason does not work, I smother it with wine and women. With women I have my former success,—this I only mention by the way. But I was tormented by something else. The whole time I thought it strange that people should look upon me as an ordinary man. During all these eight years not a single living soul has looked at me searchingly; it appeared strange to me that I had not to hide. A terrible secret is concealed in me, and still I walk about the streets. I go to dinner-parties. I flirt with women! For a criminal man such a position is unnatural and painful. I would not be tormented if I had to hide and dissemble. Psychosis, baten'ka! At last I was seized by a kind of passion. . . . I suddenly wanted to pour myself out in some way on everybody, to shout my secret at them all, though nobody is worth a sneeze . . . to do something like that . . . something extraordinary. And so I wrote this novel—indictment, in which only the witness will have any difficulty in recognizing me as a man with a secret. . . . There is not a page that does not give the key to the puzzle. Is that not true? You doubtless understand it at once. When I wrote it I took into consideration the standard of the average reader. . . ."

We were again disturbed. Andrey entered the room bringing two glasses of tea on a tray. . . . I hastened to send him away.

"Now it appears to be easier for me," Kamyshev said smiling, "now you look upon me not as an ordinary man, but as a man with a secret,—and I feel myself in a natural position. . . . But. . . . However, it is already three o'clock, and somebody is waiting for me in the cab. . . ."

"Stay, put down your hat. . . . You have told me what made you take up authorship, now tell me how you murdered."

"Do you want to know that as a supplement of what you have read? Very well. I killed in a state of aberration. Nowadays people even smoke and drink tea under the influence of aberration. In your excitement you have taken up my glass instead of your own, and you smoke more than usual. . . . Life is all aberration . . . so it appears to me. . . . When I went into the wood my thoughts were far away from murder; I went there with only one object: to find Olga and to continue to sting her. . . . When I am drunk I always feel the necessity to sting. . . . I met her about two hundred paces from the clearing. . . . She was standing under a tree and looking pensively at the sky. . . . I called to her. . . . When she saw me she smiled and stretched out her arms to me. . .

"'Don't scold me, I'm so unhappy!' she said.

"That evening she looked so beautiful, that I, drunk as I was, forgot everything in the world and pressed her in my arms. . . . She swore to me that she had never loved anybody but me . . . and that was true . . . she really loved me . . . and in the very midst of her assurance she suddenly took it into her head to say a horrible phrase: 'How unhappy I am! If I had not got married to Urbenin, I might now have married the Count!' This phrase was like a pail of cold water for me. . . . All that was boiling in my breast bubbled over. I seized the vile little creature by the shoulder and threw her to the ground as you throw a ball. My rage reached its maximum. . . . Well. . . . I finished her. . . . I just finished her. . . . Kuz'ma's case, you understand. . . ."

I glanced at Kamyshev. On his face I could neither read repentance nor regret. "I just finished her" was said as easily as "I just had a smoke." In my turn I also experienced a feeling of wrath and loathing. . . . I turned away.

"And Urbenin is in penal servitude?" I asked quietly.

"Yes. . . . I heard he had died on the way, but that is not certain. . . . What then?"

"What then? An innocent man is suffering and you ask 'What then?'"

"But what am I to do? To go and confess?"

"I should think so."

"Well, let us suppose it! . . . I have nothing against taking Urbenin's place, but I won't yield without a fight. . . . Let them take me if they want, but I won't go to them. Why did they not take me when I was in their hands? At Olga's funeral I squalled so long, and had such hysterics that even the blind must have seen the truth. . . . It is not my fault that they are stupid."

"You are odious to me," I said.

"That is natural. . . . I am odious to myself. . . ."

There was silence again. . . . I opened the cash-book and began mechanically to count up the numbers. . . . Kamyshev took up his hat.

"I see you are stifled while I am here," he said. "By-the-by, don't you want to see Count Karnéev? There he is sitting in the cab!"

I went up to the window and glanced at him. . . . Sitting in the cab with his back towards us sat a small stooping figure, in a shabby hat and a faded collar. It was difficult to recognize in him one of the actors of the drama!

"I heard that Urbenin's son is living here in Moscow in the Andréev Chambers," Kamyshev said. "I want to arrange that the Count should receive alms from him. . . . Let at least one be punished! However, I must say adieu!"

Kamyshev nodded and hastened out of the room. I sat down at the table and gave myself up to bitter thoughts. I felt stifled.

A Terrible Night

Ivan Petrovitch Requiemov became pallid, put out the lamp and began in an agitated voice:

"Not a glimmer of light pierced the thick darkness that hung over the earth on Christmas Eve, 1883. I was returning home from the house of a friend, who is now dead, where we had all remained late holding a spiritistic séance. For some reason the small by-streets, through which I had to go, were dark, and I had to make my way by groping. I was living at the time in Moscow, near the church of the Assumption on the Tombtsa, in a house belonging to the government official Cadaverov, one of the most obscure parts of the Arbat. My thoughts as I walked home were sad and depressing.

" 'Your life is drawing to an end. . . . Repent. . . .'

"These were the words Spinoza, whose spirit we had been able to call up, had addressed to me at the séance. I had asked for them again, and the saucer had not only repeated them, but had added 'to-night.' I am no believer in spiritism, but the thoughts of death, makes me gloomy. Ladies and gentlemen, death is unavoidable, is a daily occurrence, but nevertheless to man's nature it is a subject abhorrent. Now, when I was surrounded by cold, impenetrable darkness, when before my eyes I could only see torrents of raindrops, when the wind howled plaintively above my head, and there was not a single living soul anywhere near me, nor was a human sound to be heard, my soul became filled with an undefined, unaccountable dread. I, a man free from prejudices, hastened along, fearing to look back, or to the side. It seemed to me if I looked back I would inevitably see death like a spectre behind me."

Requiemov breathed heavily, he gulped down a glass of water, and continued:

"This undefined dread, you will understand, did not leave me even when having mounted to the fourth story of Cadaverov's house I opened the door and entered my room. It was dark in my modest dwelling. The wind moaned in the stove as if begging to be let into the warmth, and knocked at the door of the ventilator.

" 'If Spinoza is to be believed,' I said to myself, smiling, 'I am to die to-night amid this lamentation. It certainly is eerie!'

"I lit a match. . . . A furious gust of wind passed over the roof of the house. The gentle wailing changed into wrathful roars. Somewhere below a half-detached shutter clattered and the door of my ventilator squeaked plaintively for help. . . .

" 'It's bad for the houseless on a night like this,' I thought.

"But it was no time to give oneself up to such reflections. When the sulphur on the match I had lighted gave out a blue flame, and I cast my eyes round the room, I saw an unexpected and terrible sight. . . . What a pity the gust of wind had not reached my match! Then, perhaps I would have seen nothing and my hair would not

have stood on end. I shrieked, I made a step towards the door, and filled with horror, despair and amazement I closed my eyes.

"There was a coffin in the middle of the room.

"The blue light burnt but a short time; still I had been able to discern the outlines of the coffin. . . . I saw the pink glimmer and sparkle of the brocade, I saw the gold galloon cross on the lid. There are things, ladies and gentlemen, that stamp themselves on your memory, though you have seen them only for an instant. So it was with this coffin. I only saw it for a second, but I can remember it in all its smallest details. It was a coffin for a person of middle height, and judging by its pink colour it was for a young girl. The rich brocade, the feet, the bronze handles—all denoted that the corpse was rich.

"I rushed headlong out of my room and without reasoning, without thinking, only feeling an inexpressible dread, I tore down the stairs. The corridors and the staircase were dark, my legs got entangled in the skirts of my long fur coat, and it was a marvel that I did not fall down and break my neck. When I found myself in the street I leaned against a wet lamp-post and began to get calm. My heart palpitated, my breathing was heavy . . ."

One of the listeners turned up the lamp and moved closer to the narrator, who continued:

"I would not have been surprised if I had found my room on fire, if a robber or a mad dog had been there. . . . I would not have been surprised if the ceiling had fallen down, if the floor had collapsed, if the walls had fallen in. . . . All that is natural and comprehensible. But how could a coffin have got into my room? Where did it come from? An expensive, a woman's coffin, evidently made for some young aristocrat—how could it have found its way into the wretched room of a small government official? Was it empty, or did it contain a corpse? . . . Who was she, this rich girl who had died so inopportunely, and was now paying me this strange and terrible visit? A painful secret!

"'If this is no miracle it must be a crime,' shot through my head.

"I was lost in conjectures. During my absence the door had been locked and the place where I hid the key was known only to my most intimate friends. My friends could not have placed the coffin there! . . . It might also be supposed that the coffin had been brought to me by the undertakers owing to some error. They might have mistaken the house or gone to the wrong story or the wrong door, and had carried the coffin into the wrong flat. But who does not know that our coffin-makers will never leave a room until they have been paid for their work, or at least have received a good tip?

"'The spirits have foretold my death,' I thought. 'Can it be they who have taken the trouble to provide me with a coffin in due time?'

"Ladies and gentlemen, I do not believe nor have I ever believed in spiritism, but such a coincidence might even plunge a philosopher into a mystical frame of mind.

"'All this is stupid, and I am as cowardly as a school-boy,' I decided at last. 'It was only an optical illusion —nothing more! While walking home

my frame of mind had been so gloomy that it is not surprising that my unstrung nerves made me see a coffin. . . . Of course, it was only an optical illusion! What else could it be?'

"The rain beat in my face, and the wind tore fiercely at my coat and cap. . . . I was cold and wet through and through. I had to go somewhere—but where? To return to my own room would expose me to the risk of again seeing the coffin, and it would be beyond my strength to bear that sight. Without a single living soul near me, not hearing a single human sound, left alone face to face with that coffin in which perhaps a corpse was lying, I might lose my senses. On the other hand, to remain in the street under the torrents of rain and in the cold was impossible.

"I decided to go and pass the night at my friend Restov's room, who, as you all know, afterwards shot himself. At the time he was living in furnished rooms in the house belonging to the merchant Skullov, situated in the Dead Lane."

Requiemov wiped away the cold sweat that had appeared on his pale face, and, heaving a deep sigh, continued:

"I did not find my friend in. I knocked at his door, and at last being convinced that he was out, I felt about in the transom for the key, opened the door and went in. I threw my wet fur-coat on the floor, groped about in the darkness for the sofa and sat down to rest. It was dark. . . . The wind hummed sadly in the window ventilator. The cricket was singing its monotonous song in the stove. The bells in the Kremlin were ringing for the Christmas matins. I hastened to strike a match. But the light did not relieve me of my gloomy mood; on the contrary, a terrible, an inexpressible horror mastered me once more. I shrieked, staggered and rushed out of the room almost beside myself.

"In my friend's room, as in my own, I also saw a coffin!

"My friend's coffin was nearly twice the size of mine, and the brown material with which it was covered gave it an especially gloomy appearance. How had it got there? It could only be an optical illusion—how was it possible to doubt it. . . . There could not be coffins in every room! My nerves were evidently diseased. . . . I had hallucinations. Wherever I might go now I would always see before me the terrible dwelling of the dead. Consequently I was mad, I was infected with something like 'coffin-mania' and the cause of my mental derangement was not far to seek: it was only necessary to remember the spiritistic séance and Spinoza's words. . . .

"'I am going mad!' I thought in terror, seizing my head in my hands. 'My God! My God! What am I to do?'

"My head was ready to burst, my legs failed me. . . . The rain poured down as if out of buckets, the wind pierced me through and through, and I had neither a fur-coat nor a cap I could not go back to fetch them from the room . . . that was beyond my strength. . . . Dread clasped me firmly in its cold embrace. My hair stood on end, cold perspiration streamed down my face, although I believed that it was only hallucinations.

"What was I to do?" Requiemov continued. "I was out of my mind, and

I risked catching a severe cold. Fortunately, I remembered that my good friend Godsacreov, who had but lately received his doctor's degree, was living not far from the Dead Lane. He had also been with us at the spiritistic séance. I hastened to him. . . . At that time he had not yet married the rich merchant's daughter, and was living in the fifth story of the house belonging to the State Councillor Graveyardin.

"At Godsacreov's my nerves were destined to be subjected to further torture. As I was mounting to the fifth story I heard a terrible noise. Somebody was running about upstairs, stamping heavily with his feet and slamming doors.

" 'Help!' I heard somebody cry in a voice that pierced the very soul. 'Help! Porter!'

"A moment later a dark figure in a fur-coat and a crushed silk hat rushed down the stairs towards me.

" 'Godsacreov," I cried, recognizing my friend. 'Is it you? What is the matter?'

"When Godsacreov reached the landing on which I was standing he stopped and seized me convulsively by the hand. He was pale, he breathed heavily and trembled. His eyes wandered restlessly around, his chest heaved. . . .

" 'Is that you, Requiemov?' he asked in a hoarse voice. 'Is it really you? You are pale, like one risen from the grave. . . . But no, are you not a hallucination? My God. . . . You look terrible! . . .'

" 'But what's the matter with you? You look like a ghost!'

" 'Och! wait, my dear fellow, let me recover my breath. . . . I am glad to have met you, if it really is you and not an optical illusion. That damned spiritistic séance. . . . It has so upset my nerves that, would you believe it, just now, when I came home, I saw in my room . . . a coffin!'

"I could not believe my own ears, and asked him to repeat what he had said.

" 'A coffin, a real coffin!' the doctor repeated, sitting down on the steps quite exhausted. 'I am no coward, but the devil himself would be frightened if, after a spiritistic séance, he ran up against a coffin.'

"Stammering and confusedly I told the doctor about the coffins I had seen . . .

"For a minute we looked at each other with staring eyes, and open mouthed with astonishment. Then to convince ourselves that we were not dreaming we began pinching each other.

" 'We both feel pain,' the doctor said, 'so at the present moment we are not asleep, and we are not dreaming of each other. Therefore, my coffin and both your coffins were not optical illusions, but something that exists. What are we to do now, old man?'

"We stood for a whole hour on the cold staircase, lost in guesses and conjectures; we got terribly cold and at last decided to conquer our cowardly fear, arouse the man-servant on duty and go with him to the doctor's room. So we went. We entered the room, lit a candle and we really saw a coffin covered with white silver brocade with gold fringe and tassels. The man-servant piously crossed himself.

" 'Now we can find out,' the doctor said, still trembling in every limb,

the coffin is empty or if it is . . . inhabited!'

"After long and quite comprehensible hesitation the doctor bent over the coffin and, pressing his lips together from fright and expectation, he tore off the lid of the coffin.

"We looked into the coffin and . . .

"The coffin was empty. . . .

"There was no corpse in it, but instead we found the following letter:

" 'Dear Godsacreov,

" 'You know that my father-in-law's business has got into a terrible mess. He is over head and ears in debt. Tomorrow or the day after there will be an execution in his house, and this would entirely ruin his family and mine, and would ruin our honour too, which is more precious than anything else for me. At a family council we held yesterday we decided to hide everything valuable or of worth. As the whole of my father-in-law's property consists of coffins (he is, as you doubtless know, the best undertaker in town), we decided to hide away all the best coffins. I entreat you, as a friend, to save our property and our honour! Hoping that you will help us to save our goods, I send you, dear old fellow, one coffin, with the request that you will hide it in your rooms, and keep it till called for. Without the assistance of our friends and acquaintances we are ruined. I hope that you will not refuse me this assistance, all the more as the coffin will not remain with you for more than a week. To everyone whom I consider as our sincere friend I have sent a coffin, trusting in their magnanimity and nobility.

" 'Your affectionate,

" 'Ivan Jawin.'

"For three months after that I had to undergo a cure for my shattered nerves, while our friend, the undertaker's son-in-law, saved both his honour and his property, and is now the owner of an undertaker's business; he arranges funeral processions, sells monuments and gravestones. His business, however, is not getting on very well, and every evening when I come home I always expect to find next to my bed a white marble monument or a catafalque."

In Exile

Old Semión, nicknamed Wiseacre, and a young unknown Tartar, sat by the bonfire near the river. The other three ferrymen lay in the hut. Semión, sixty years old, and toothless, but broad-shouldered and strong, was drunk; he would have been asleep long ago if it had not been for vodka and a dread that his companions in the hut might want his. The Tartar was sick and weary; and sat there, wrapped up in his rags, holding forth on the glories of life in Simbirsk, and of the fair and smart wife he had left behind him. He was about twenty-five years old, but now in the light of the camp fire his pale, sad and sickly face seemed boyish.

"Yes, you can hardly call it para-

dise," said Wiseacre. Water, banks, and clay and that's all. Holy Week is gone, but there is still ice floating down the river, and now snow."

"Misery, misery!" moaned the Tartar, looking round him in terror.

Ten paces below them lay the river, dark and cold, grumbling, it seemed, at itself, as it clove a path through the steep clay banks, and bore itself swiftly to the sea. Up against the bank lay one of the great barges which the ferrymen call *karbases*. On the opposite side, far away, rising and falling, and mingling with one another, crept little serpents of fire. It was the burning of last year's grass. And behind the serpents of fire darkness again. From the river came the noise of little ice floes crashing against the barge. Darkness only, and cold!

The Tartar looked at the sky. There were as many stars there as in his own country, just the same blackness above him. But something was lacking. At home in Simbirsk government there were no such stars and no such heaven.

"Misery, misery!" he repeated.

"You'll get used to it," said Wiseacre, grinning. "You're young and foolish now—your mother's milk is still wet on your lips, only youth and folly could make you imagine there's no one more miserable than you. But the time'll come when you'll say, 'God grant every one such a life as this!' Look at me, for instance. In a week's time the water will have fallen, we'll launch the small boat, you'll be off to Siberia to amuse yourselves, and I'll remain here and row from one side to another. Twenty years now I've been ferrying. Day and night! Salmon and pike beneath the water and I above it! And God be thanked! I don't want for anything! God grant everyone such a life!"

The Tartar thrust some brushwood into the fire, lay closer to it, and said:

"My father is ill. When he dies my mother and wife are coming. They promised me."

"What do you want with a mother and wife?" asked Wiseacre, "put that out of your head, it's all nonsense, brother! It's the devil's doing to make you think such thoughts. Don't listen to him, accursed! If he begins about women, answer him back, 'Don't want them.' If he comes about freedom, answer him back, 'Don't want it.' You don't want anything. Neither father, nor mother, nor wife, nor freedom, nor house, nor home. You don't want anything, d——n them!"

Wiseacre took a drink from his flask and continued:

"I, brother, am no simple mujik, but a sexton's son, and when I lived in freedom in Kursk wore a frockcoat, yet now I have brought myself to such a point that I can sleep naked on the earth and eat grass. And God grant everyone such a life! I don't want anything, and I don't fear anyone, and I know there is no one richer and freer than I in the world. The first day I came here from Russia I persisted, 'I don't want anything.' The devil took me on also about wife, and home, and freedom, but I answered him back 'I don't want anything.' I tired him out, and now, as you see, I live well, and don't complain. If any one bates an inch to the devil, or listens to him even once, he's lost—there's no salvation for him—he sinks in the bog to the crown of his head, and never gets out.

"Don't think it's only our brother, the stupid mujik, that gets lost. The well-born and educated lose themselves also. Fifteen years ago they sent a gentleman here from Russia. He wouldn't share something with his brothers, and did something dishonest with a will. Belonged, they said, to a prince's or a baron's family—maybe he was an official, who can tell? Well, anyway he came, and the first thing he did was to buy himself a house and land in Mukhortinsk. 'I want,' he says, 'to live by my work, by the sweat of my brow, because,' he says, 'I am no longer a gentleman, but a convict.' 'Well,' I said, 'may God help him, he can do nothing better.' He was a young man, fussy, and fond of talking; mowed his own grass, caught fish, and rode on horseback sixty versts a day. That was the cause of the misfortune. From the first year he used to ride to Guirino, to the post office. He would stand with me in the boat and sigh: 'Akh, Semión, how long they are sending me money from home.' 'You don't want it, Vassili Sergeyitch,' I answered, 'what good is money to you? Give up the old ways, forget them as if they never were, as if you had dreamt them, and begin to live anew. Pay no attention,' I said, 'to the devil, he'll bring you nothing but ill. At present, you want only money, but in a little time you'll want something more. If you want to be happy, don't wish for anything at all. Yes. . . . Already,' I used to say to him, 'fortune has done you and me a bad turn—there's no good begging charity from her, and bowing down to her—you must despise and laugh at her. Then she'll begin to laugh herself.' So I used to talk to him.

"Well, two years after he came, he drove down to the ferry in good spirits. He was rubbing his hands and laughing. 'I am going to Guirino,' he says, 'to meet my wife. She has taken pity on me, and is coming. She is a good wife.' He was out of breath from joy.

"The next day he came back with his wife. She was a young woman, a good-looking one, in a hat, with a little girl in her arms. And my Vassili Sergeyitch bustles about her, feasts his eyes on her, and praises her up to the skies, 'Yes, brother Semión, even in Siberia people live.' 'Well,' I thought, 'he won't always think so.' From that time out, every week, he rode to Guirino to inquire whether money had been sent to him from Russia. Money he wanted without end. 'For my sake,' he used to say, 'she is burying her youth and beauty in Siberia, and sharing my miserable life. For this reason I must procure her every enjoyment.' And to make things gayer for her, he makes acquaintance with officials and all kinds of people. All this company, of course, had to be fed and kept in drink, a piano must be got, and a shaggy dog for the sofa—in one word, extravagance, luxury. . . . She didn't live with him long. How could she? Mud, water, cold, neither vegetable nor fruit, bears and drunkards around her, and she a woman from Petersburg, petted and spoiled. . . . Of course, she got sick of it. . . . Yes, and a husband, too, no longer a man, but a convict. . . . Well, after three years, I remember, on Assumption Eve, I heard shouting from the opposite bank. When I rowed across I saw the lady all wrapped up, and with her a young man, one of the officials. A troïka! I rowed

them across, they got into the troïka and drove off. Towards morning Vassili Sergeyoitch drives up in hot haste. 'Did my wife go by,' he asked, 'with a man in spectacles?' 'Yes,' I said, 'seek the wind in the field.' He drove after them, and chased them for five days. When I ferried him back, he threw himself into the bottom of the boat, beat his head against the planks, and howled. I laughed and reminded him, 'even in Siberia people live!' But that only made him worse.

"After this he tried to regain his freedom. His wife had gone back to Russia, and he thought only of seeing her, and getting her to return to him. Every day he galloped off to one place or another, one day to the post office, the next to town to see the authorities. He sent in petitions asking for pardon and permission to return to Russia—on telegrams alone, he used to say, he spent two hundred roubles. He sold his land and mortgaged his house to a Jew. He got grey-haired and bent, and his face turned yellow like a consumptive's. He could not speak without tears coming into his eyes. Eight years he spent sending in petitions. Then he came to life again; he had got a new consolation. The daughter, you see, was growing up. He doted on her. And to tell the truth, she wasn't bad-looking—pretty, black-browed, and high-spirited. Every Sunday he rode with her to the church at Guirino. They would stand side by side in the boat, she laughing, and he never lifting his eyes from her. 'Yes,' he said, 'Semión, even in Siberia people live, and are happy. See what a daughter I've got! you might go a thousand versts and never see another like her.' The daughter, as I said, was really good-looking. 'But wait a little,' I used to say to myself, 'the girl is young, the blood flows in her veins, she wants to live; and what is life here?' Anyway, brother, she began to grieve. Pined and declined, dwindled away, got ill, and now can't stand on her legs. Consumption! There's your Siberian happiness! That's the way people live in Siberia! . . . And my Vassili Sergeyitch spends his time driving about to doctors and bringing them home. Once let him hear there's a doctor or a magic curer within two or three hundred versts, and after him he must go. . . . It's terrible to think of the amount of money he spends, he might as well drink it. . . . She'll die all the same, nothing'll save her, and then he'll be altogether lost. Whether he hangs himself from grief or runs off to Russia it's all the same. If he runs away they'll catch him, then we'll have a trial and penal servitude, and the rest of it. . . ."

"It was very well for him," said the Tartar, shuddering with the cold.

"What was well?"

"Wife and daughter. . . . Whatever he suffers, whatever punishment he'll have, at any rate he saw them. . . . *You* say you don't want anything. But to have nothing is bad. His wife lived with him three years, God granted him that. To have nothing is bad, but three years is good. You don't understand."

Trembling with cold, finding only with painful difficulty the proper Russian words, the Tartar began to beg that God might save him from dying in a strange land, and being buried in the cold earth. If his wife were to come to him, even for one day, even

for one hour, for such happiness he would consent to undergo the most frightful tortures, and thank God for them. Better one day's happiness than nothing!

And he again told the story of how he had left at home a handsome and clever wife. Then, putting both his hands to his head, he began to cry, and to assure Semión that he was guilty of nothing, and was suffering unjustly. His two brothers and his uncle had stolen a peasant's horses, and beaten the old man half to death. But society had treated him unfairly, and sent the three brothers to Siberia, while the uncle, a rich man, remained at home.

"You'll get used to it!" said Semión.

The Tartar said nothing, and only turned his wet eyes on the fire; his face expressed doubt and alarm, as if he did not yet understand why he lay there in darkness and in cold among strangers, and not at Simbirsk. Wiseacre lay beside the fire, laughed silently at something, and hummed a tune.

"What happiness can she have with her father?" he began after a few minutes' silence. "He loves her, and finds her a consolation, that's true. But you can't put your finger in his eyes; he's a cross old man, a stern old man. And with young girls you don't want sternness. What they want is caresses, and ha! ha! ha! and ho! ho! ho!—perfume and pomade. Yes . . . Akh, business, business!" He sighed, lifting himself clumsily. "Vodka all gone—means it's time to go to bed. Well, I'm off, brother."

The Tartar added some more brushwood to the fire, lay down again, and began to think of his native village and of his wife; if his wife would only come for a week, for a day, let her go back if she liked! Better a few days, even a day, than nothing! But if his wife kept her promise and came, what would he feed her with? Where would she live?

"How can you live without anything to eat?" he asked aloud.

For working day and night at an oar they paid him only ten kopecks a day. True, passengers sometimes gave money for tea and vodka, but the others shared this among themselves, gave nothing to the Tartar, and only laughed at him. From poverty he was hungry, cold, and frightened. His whole body ached and trembled. If he went into the hut there would be nothing for him to cover himself with. Here, too, he had nothing to cover himself with, but he might keep up the fire.

In a week the waters would have fallen, and the ferrymen, with the exception of Semión, would no longer be wanted. The Tartar must begin his tramp from village to village asking for bread and work. His wife was only seventeen years old; she was pretty, modest, and spoiled. How could she tramp with uncovered face through the villages and ask for bread? It was too horrible to think of.

When next the Tartar looked up it was dawn. The barge, the willows, and the ripples stood out plainly. You might turn round and see the clayey slope, with its brown thatched hut at the bottom, and above it the huts of the village. In the village the cocks already crowed.

The clayey slope, the barge, the river, the strange wicked people, hunger, cold, sickness—in reality there was

none of this at all. It was only a dream, thought the Tartar. He felt that he was sleeping, and heard himself snore. Of course, he was at home in Simbirsk, he had only to call his wife by name and she would call back; in the next room lay his old mother. . . . What terrible things are dreams! . . . Where do they come from? . . . The Tartar smiled and opened his eyes. What river was this? The Volga?

It began to snow.

"Ahoy!" came a voice from the other side, "boatman!"

The Tartar shook himself, and went to awaken his companions. Dragging on their sheepskin coats on the way, swearing in voices hoarse from sleep, the ferrymen appeared on the bank. After sleep, the river, with its piercing breeze, evidently seemed to them a nightmare. They tumbled lazily into the boat. The Tartar and three ferrymen took up the long, wide-bladed oars which looked in the darkness like the claws of a crab. Semión threw himself on his stomach across the helm. On the opposite bank the shouting continued, and twice revolver shots were heard. The stranger evidently thought that the ferrymen were asleep or had gone into the village to the kabak.

"You'll get across in time," said Wiseacre in the tone of a man who is convinced that in this world there is no need for hurry. "It's all the same in the end; you'll gain nothing by making a noise."

The heavy, awkward barge parted from the bank, cleaving a path through the willows, and only the slow movement of the willows backward showed that it was moving at all. The ferrymen slowly raised their oars in time. Wiseacre lay on his stomach across the helm, and, describing a bow in the air, swung slowly from one side to the other. In the dim light it seemed as if the men were sitting on some long-clawed antediluvian animal, floating with it into the cold desolate land that is sometimes seen in nightmares.

The willows soon were passed and the open water reached. On the other bank the creak and measured dipping of the oars were already audible, and cries of "Quicker, quicker!" came back across the water. Ten minutes more and the barge struck heavily against the landing-stage.

"It keeps on falling, it keeps on falling," grumbled Semión, rubbing the snow from his face. "Where it all comes from God only knows!"

On the bank stood a frail old man of low stature in a short foxskin coat and white lambskin cap. He stood immovable at some distance from the horses; his face had a gloomy concentrated expression, as if he were trying to remember something, and were angry with his disobedient memory. When Semión approached him, and, smiling, took off his cap, he began:

"I am going in great haste to Anastasevka. My daughter is worse. In Anastasevka, I am told, a new doctor has been appointed."

The ferrymen dragged the cart on to the barge, and started back. The man, whom Semión called Vassili Sergeyitch, stood all the time immovable, tightly compressing his thick fingers, and when the driver asked for permission to smoke in his presence, answered nothing, as if he had not heard. Semión, lying on his stomach across the helm, looked at him maliciously, and said:

"Even in Siberia people live! Even in Siberia!"

Wiseacre's face bore a triumphant expression, as if he had demonstrated something, and rejoiced that things had justified his prediction. The miserable, helpless expression of the man in the foxskin coat evidently only increased his delight.

"It's muddy travelling at this time, Vassili Sergeyitch," he said, as they harnessed the horses on the river bank. "You might have waited another week or two till it got drier. For the matter of that, you might just as well not go at all. . . . If there was any sense in going it would be another matter, but you yourself know that you might go on for ever and nothing would come of it. . . . Well?"

Vassili Sergeyitch silently handed the men some money, climbed into the cart, and drove off.

"After that doctor again," said Semión, shuddering from the cold. "Yes, look for a real doctor—chase the wind in the field, seize the devil by the tail, damn him. Akh, what characters these people are! Lord forgive me, a sinner!"

The Tartar walked up to Semión, and looked at him with hatred and repulsion. Then, trembling, and mixing Tartar words with his broken Russian, he said:

"He is a good man, a good man, and you are bad. You are bad. He is a good soul, a great one, but you are a beast. . . . He is living, but you are dead. . . . God made men that they might have joys and sorrows, but you ask for nothing. . . . You are a stone, —earth! A stone wants nothing, and you want nothing. . . . You are a stone, and God has no love for you. But him He loves!"

All laughed; the Tartar alone frowned disgustedly, shook his hand, and, pulling his rags more closely round him, walked back to the fire. Semión and the ferrymen returned to the hut.

"Cold!" said one ferryman in a hoarse voice, stretching himself on the straw with which the floor was covered.

"Yes, it's not warm," said another. "A galley-slave's life!"

All lay down. The door opened before the wind, and snowflakes whirled through the hut. But no one rose to shut it, all were too cold and lazy.

"I, for one, am all right," said Semión. "God grant everyone such a life."

"You, it is known, were born a galley-slave—the devil himself wouldn't take you."

From the yard came strange sounds like the whining of a dog.

"What's that? Who's there?"

"It's the Tartar crying."

"Well . . . what a character!"

"He'll get used to it," said Semión, and went off to sleep.

Soon all the others followed his example. But the door remained unshut.

The Proposal

VALANTIN PETROVICH PEREDERKIN, a handsome young man, put on his evening suit, patent leather shoes, and his opera hat and drove to the house of Princess Vera Zapiskina, bursting for joy.

It is a thousand pities, reader, that you do not know the Princess Vera, that sweet, enchanting creature, with blue eyes and silken curls of fascinating waves.

The waves of the sea break on the rocks, but the waves of her hair, on the contrary, would break and scatter in fragments the hardest stone. One would have to be wooden to resist her smile, or the charm that her small but graceful figure spread round her, or when she laughs, or shows her flashing white teeth in fair speech.

Perederkin was received.

He sat down opposite the Princess and, feeling helpless with emotion, began:

"Princess, can you listen to me?"

"Oh, yes."

"Princess—forgive me—I don't know where to begin. It is so unexpected for you . . . so sudden. . . . You will not take it ill?"

He pulled his pocket-handkerchief out of his pocket and mopped his face, while the Princess smiled sweetly and looked inquiringly at him.

"Princess," he continued, "from the moment I saw you for the first time my soul was filled with an unconquerable desire. . . . This desire gives me no peace by night, or day . . . and if it is not satisfied I . . . I shall be miserable."

The Princess lowered her eyes meditatively.

Perederkin hesitated, and then continued:

"You, of course, will be surprised . . . you are above everything earthly, but . . . for me you are the most suitable . . ."

Silence.

"More especially as my estate touches yours. . . . I am rich. . . ."

"But what is it all about?" the Princess asked quietly.

"What it is all about, Princess, Perederkin exclaimed with emotion, rising from his seat, "I entreat you, do not refuse. . . . Do not ruin my plans by your refusal. My dear, let me propose. . . ."

Valantin Petrovich sat down again hastily, and bending towards the Princess, whispered:

"The proposal is a most profitable one. In one year we shall sell a million poods of tallow. Let us start on our adjoining estates a limited liability company for tallow-boiling. . . ."

The Princess reflected for a moment and then answered:

"With pleasure."

The reader who expected a melodramatic ending will be disappointed.

Who to Blame?

As my uncle Pyotr Demyanitch, a lean, bilious collegiate councillor, exceedingly like a stale smoked fish with a stick through it, was getting ready to go to the high school, where he taught Latin, he noticed that the corner of his grammar was nibbled by mice.

"I say, Praskovya," he said, going into the kitchen and addressing the cook, "how it is we have got mice here? Upon my word! yesterday my top hat was nibbled, today they have disfigured my Latin grammar. . . . At this rate they will soon begin eating my clothes!"

"What can I do? I did not bring them in!" answered Praskovya.

"We must do something! You had better get a cat, hadn't you?" . . .

"I've got a cat, but what good is it?"

And Praskovya pointed to the corner where a white kitten, thin as a match, lay curled up asleep beside a broom.

"Why it is no good?" asked Pyotr Demyanitch.

"It's young yet, and foolish. It's not two months old yet."

"H'm. . . . Then it must be trained. It had much better be learning instead of lying there."

"Saying this, Pyotr Demyanitch sighed with a careworn air and went out of the kitchen. The kitten raised his head, looked lazily after him, and shut his eyes again.

The kitten lay awake thinking. Of what? Unacquainted with real life, having no store of accumulated impressions, his mental processes could only be instinctive, and he could but picture life in accordance with the conceptions that he had inherited, together with his flesh and blood, from his ancestors, the tigers (*vide* Darwin). His thoughts were of the nature of day-dreams. His feline imagination pictured something like the Arabian desert, over which flitted shadows closely resembling Praskovya, the stove, the broom. In the midst of the shadows there suddenly appeared a saucer of milk; the saucer began to grow paws, it began moving and displayed a tendency to run; the kitten made a bound, and with a thrill of blood-thirsty sensuality thrust his claws into it. . . . When the saucer had vanished into obscurity a piece of meat appeared, dropped by Praskovya; the meat ran away with a cowardly squeak, but the kitten made a bound and got his claws into it. . . . Everything that rose before the imagination of the young dreamer had for its starting point leaps, claws and teeth. . . . The soul of another is darkness, and a cat's soul more than most, but how near the visions just described are to the truth may be seen from the following fact: under the influence of his day-dreams the kitten suddenly leaped up, looked with flashing eyes at Praskovya, ruffled up his coat, and making one bound, thrust his claws into the cook's skirt. Obviously he was born a mouse catcher, a worthy son of his blood-thirsty ancestors. Fate had destined him to be the terror of cellars, store rooms and corn bins, and had it not been for education . . . we will not anticipate, however.

On his way home from the high school, Pyotr Demyanitch went into a general shop and bought a mouse trap for fifteen kopecks. At dinner he fixed a little bit of his rissole on the hook, and set the trap under the sofa, where there were heaps of the pupils' old exercise books, which Praskovya used for various domestic purposes. At six o'clock in the evening, when the worthy Latin master was sitting at the table correcting his pupils' exercises, there was a sudden "klop!" so loud that my uncle started and dropped his pen. He went at once to the sofa and took out the trap. A neat little mouse, the size of a thimble, was sniffing the wires and trembling with fear.

"Aha," muttered Pyotr Demyanitch, and he looked at the mouse malignantly, as though he were about to give him a bad mark. "You are caught, wretch! Wait a bit! I'll teach you to eat my grammar!"

Having gloated over his victim, Pyotr Demyanitch put the mouse trap on the floor and called:

"Praskovya, there's a mouse caught! Bring the kitten here!"

"I'm coming," responded Praskovya, and a minute later she came in with the descendant of tigers in her arms.

"Capital!" said Pyotr Demyanitch, rubbing his hands. "We will give him a lesson. . . . Put him down opposite the mouse trap . . . that's it. . . . Let him sniff it and look at it. . . . That's it. . . ."

The kitten looked wonderingly at my uncle, at his arm chair, sniffed the mouse trap in bewilderment, then, frightened probably by the glaring lamplight and the attention directed to him, made a dash and ran in terror to the door.

"Stop!" shouted my uncle, seizing him by the tail, "stop, you rascal! He's afraid of a mouse, the idiot! Look! It's a mouse! Look! Well? Look, I tell you!"

Pyotr Demyanitch took the kitten by the scruff of the neck and pushed him with his nose against the mouse trap.

"Look, you carrion! Take him and hold him, Praskovya. . . . Hold him opposite the door of the trap. . . . When I let the mouse out, you let him go instantly. . . . Do you hear? . . . Instantly let go! Now!"

My uncle assumed a mysterious expression and lifted the door of the trap. . . . The mouse came out irresolutely, sniffed the air, and flew like an arrow under the sofa. . . . The kitten on being released darted under the table with his tail in the air.

"It has got away! got away!" cried Pyotr Demyanitch, looking ferocious. "Where is he, the scoundrel? Under the table? You wait. . . ."

My uncle dragged the kitten from under the table and shook him in the air.

"Wretched little beast," he muttered, smacking him on the ear. "Take that, take that! Will you shirk it next time? Wr-r-r-etch. . . ."

Next day Praskovya heard again the summons.

"Praskovya, there is a mouse caught! Bring the kitten here!"

After the outrage of the previous day the kitten had taken refuge under the stove and had not come out all night. When Praskovya pulled him out and, carrying him by the scruff of the neck into the study, set him down before

the mouse trap, he trembled all over and mewed piteously.

"Come, let him feel at home first," Pyotr Demyanitch commanded. "Let him look and sniff. Look and learn! Stop, plague take you!" he shouted, noticing that the kitten was backing away from the mouse trap. "I'll thrash you! Hold him by the ear! That's it. . . . Well now, set him down before the trap. . . ."

My uncle slowly lifted the door of the trap . . . the mouse whisked under the very nose of the kitten, flung itself against Praskovya's hand and fled under the cupboard; the kitten, feeling himself free, took a desperate bound and retreated under the sofa.

"He's let another mouse go!" bawled Pyotr Demyanitch. "Do you call that a cat? Nasty little beast! Thrash him! thrash him by the mouse trap!"

When the third mouse had been caught, the kitten shivered all over at the sight of the mouse trap and its inmate, and scratched Praskovya's hand. . . . After the fourth mouse my uncle flew into a rage, kicked the kitten, and said:

"Take the nasty thing away! Get rid of it! Chuck it away! It's no earthly use!"

A year passed, the thin, frail kitten had turned into a solid and sagacious tom cat. One day he was on his way by the back yards to an amatory interview. He had just reached his destination when he suddenly heard a rustle, and thereupon caught sight of a mouse which ran from a water trough towards a stable; my hero's hair stood on end, he arched his back, hissed, and trembling all over, took to ignominous fight.

Alas! sometimes I feel myself in the ludicrous position of the flying cat. Like the kitten, I had in my day the honor of being taught Latin by my uncle. Now, whenever I chance to see some work of classical antiquity, instead of being moved to eager enthusiasm, I begin recalling, *ut consecutivum*, the irregular verbs, the sallow grey face of my uncle, the ablative absolute. . . . I turn pale, my hair stands up on my head, and, like the cat, I take to ignominous flight.

Rothschild's Fiddle

THE town was no larger than a village and was so inhabited almost entirely by old people of long life that it was positively calamitous. In the hospital, and even in the prison, coffins were seldom needed. In one word, business was bad. If Yacob Ivanof had been coffin-maker in the government town, he would have owned his own house, and called himself Yakob Matvieitch; but, as it was, he was only Yakob, with a street nickname of "Bronza"; and lived like a peasant in a little, old, one room cabin; and in this room lived he, Marfa, the stove, a double bed, the coffins, a joiner's bench, and all the household articles.

Yet Yakob made coffins, durable and

fine. For peasants and petty tradespeople he made them all of one size (his own); and this method was perfect, for though seventy years of age, there was not a taller or stouter man in the town or prison. For women and for men of good birth he made his coffins to measure, using for this purpose an iron yardwand. Orders for children's coffins he accepted very unwillingly, made them without measurement, as if in contempt, and every time when paid for his work exclaimed:

"Thanks. But I confess I don't care much for wasting time on trifles."

In addition to coffin-making Yakob drew a small income from his skill with the fiddle. At weddings in the town there usually played a Jewish orchestra, the conductor of which was the tinsmith Moses Ilitch Shakhkes, who kept more than half the takings for himself. As Yakob played very well upon the fiddle, being particularly skilful with Russian songs, Shakhkes sometimes employed him in the orchestra, paying him fifty kopecks a day, exclusive of gifts from the guests. When Bronza sat in the orchestra he perspired and his face grew purple; it was always hot, the smell of garlic was suffocating; the fiddle whined, at his right ear snored the double-bass, at his left wept the flute, played by a lanky, red-haired Jew with a whole network of red and blue veins upon his face, who bore the same surname as the famous millionaire Rothschild. And even the merriest tunes this accursed Jew managed to play sadly. Without any tangible cause Yakob had become slowly penetrated with hatred and contempt for Jews, and especially for Rothschild; he began with irritation, then swore at him, and once even was about to hit him; but Rothschild flared up, and, looking at him furiously, said:

"If it were not that I respect you for your talents, I should send you flying out of the window."

Then he began to cry. So Bronza was employed in the orchestra very seldom, and only in cases of extreme need when one of the Jews was absent. Yakob had never been in a good humour. He was always overwhelmed by the sense of the losses which he suffered. For instance, on Sundays and saints' days it was a sin to work, Monday was a tiresome day—and so on; so that in one way or another, there were about two hundred days in the year when he was compelled to sit with his hands idle. That was one loss! If anyone in the town got married without music, or if Shakhkes did not employ Yakob, that was another loss. The Inspector of Police was ill for two years, and Yakob waited with impatience for his death, yet in the end the Inspector transferred himself to the government town for the purpose of treatment, where he got worse and died. There was another loss, a loss at the very least of ten roubles, as the Inspector's coffin would have been an expensive one lined with brocade. Regrets for his losses generally overtook Yakob at night; he lay in bed with the fiddle beside him, and, with his head full of such speculations, would take the bow, the fiddle giving out through the darkness a melancholy sound which made Yakob feel better.

On the sixth of May last year Marfa was suddenly taken ill. She breathed heavily, drank much water and staggered. Yet next morning she lighted

the stove, and even went for water. Towards evening she lay down. All day Yakob had played on the fiddle, and when it grew dark he took the book in which every day he inscribed his losses, and from want of something better to do, began to add them up. The total amounted to more than a thousand roubles. The thought of such losses so horrified him that he threw the book on the floor and stamped his feet. Then he took up the book, snapped his fingers, and sighed heavily. His face was purple, and wet with perspiration. He reflected that if this thousand roubles had been lodged in the bank the interest per annum would have amounted to at least forty roubles. That meant that the forty roubles were also a loss. In one word, wherever you turn, everywhere you meet with loss, and profits none.

"Yakob," cried Marfa unexpectedly, "I am dying."

He glanced at his wife. Her face was red from fever and unusually clear and joyful; and Bronza, who was accustomed to see her pale, timid, and unhappy-looking, felt confused. It seemed as if she were indeed dying, and were happy in the knowledge that she was leaving for ever the cabin, the coffins, and Yakob. And now she looked at the ceiling and twitched her lips, as if she had seen Death her deliverer, and were whispering with him.

Morning came; through the window might be seen the rising of the sun. Looking at his old wife, Yakob somehow remembered that all his life he had never treated her kindly, never caressed her, never pitied her, never thought of buying her a kerchief for her head, never carried away from the weddings a piece of tasty food, but only roared at her, abused her for his losses, and rushed at her with shut fists. True, he had never beaten her, but he had often frightened her out of her life and left her rooted to the ground with terror. Yes, and he had forbidden her to drink tea, as the losses without that were great enough; so she drank always hot water. And now, beginning to understand why she had such a strange, enraptured face, he felt uncomfortable.

When the sun had risen high he borrowed a cart from a neighbour, and brought Marfa to the hospital. There were not many patients there, and he had to wait only three hours. To his joy he was received not by the doctor but by the feldscher, Maxim Nikolaitch, an old man of whom it was said that, although he was drunken and quarrelsome, he knew more than the doctor.

"May your health be good!" said Yakob, leading the old woman into the dispensary. "Forgive me, Maxim Nikolaitch, for troubling you with my empty affairs. But there, you can see for yourself my object is ill. The companion of my life, as they say, excuse the expression . . ."

Contracting his grey brows and smoothing his whiskers, the feldscher began to examine the old woman, who sat on the tabouret, bent, skinny, sharp-nosed, and with open mouth so that she resembled a bird that is about to drink.

"So . . ." said the feldscher slowly, and then sighed. "Influenza and may be a bit of a fever. There is typhus now in the town . . what can I do? She is an old woman, glory be to God. . . . How old?"

"Sixty-nine years, Maxim Nikolaitch."

"An old woman. It's high time for her."

"Of course! Your remark is very just," said Yakob, smiling out of politeness; but allow me to make one remark; every insect is fond of life."

The feldscher replied in a tone which implied that upon him alone depended her life or death. "I will tell you what you'll do, friend; put on her head a cold compress, and give her these powders twice a day. And good-bye to you."

By the expression of the feldscher's face, Yacob saw that it was a bad business, and that no powders would make it any better; it was quite plain to him that Marfa was beyond repair, and would assuredly die, if not to-day then to-morrow. He touched the feldscher on the arm, blinked his eyes, and said in a whisper:

"Yes, Maxim Nikolaitch, but you will let her blood."

"I have no time, no time, friend. Take your old woman, and God be with you!"

"Do me this one kindness!" implored Yakob. "You yourself know that if she merely had her stomach out of order, or some internal organ wrong, then powders and mixtures would cure; but she has caught cold. In cases of cold the first thing is to bleed the patient."

But the feldscher had already called for the next patient, and into the dispensary came a peasant woman with a little boy.

"Be off!" he said to Yakob, with a frown.

"At least try the effect of leeches. I will pray God eternally for you."

The feldscher lost his temper, and roared:

"Not another word."

Yakob also lost his temper, and grew purple in the face; but he said nothing more and took Marfa under his arm and led her out of the room. As soon as he had got her into the cart, he looked angrily and contemptuously at the hospital and said:

"What an artist! He will let the blood of a rich man, but for a poor man grudges even a leech. Herod!"

When they arrived home, and entered the cabin, Marfa stood for a moment holding on to the stove. She was afraid that if she were to lie down Yakob would begin to complain about his losses, and abuse her for lying in bed and doing no work. And Yakob looked at her with tedium in his soul and remembered that to-morrow was John the Baptist, and the day after Nikolai the Miracle-worker, and then came Sunday, and after that Monday—another idle day. For four days no work could be done, and Marfa would be sure to die on one of these days. Her coffin must be made to-day. He took the iron yardwand, went up to the old woman and took her measure. After that she lay down, and Yakob crossed himself, and began to make a coffin.

When the work was finished, Bronza put on his spectacles and wrote in his book of losses:

"Marfa Ivanova's coffin—2 roubles, 40 kopecks."

And he signed. All the time Marfa had lain silently with her eyes closed. Towards evening, when it was growing dark, she called her husband:

"Rememberest, Yakob?" she said, looking at him joyfully. "Remember

est, fifty years ago God gave us a baby with yellow hair. Thou and I then sat every day by the river . . . under the willow . . . and sang songs." And laughing bitterly she added: "The child died."

"That is all imagination," said Yakob.

Later on came the priest, administered to Mafa the Sacrament and extreme unction. Marfa began to mutter something incomprehensible, and towards morning, died.

The old-women neighbours washed her, wrapped her in her winding sheet, and laid her out. To avoid having to pay the deacon's fee, Yakob himself read the psalms; and escaped a fee also at the graveyard, as the watchman there was his godfather. Four peasants carried the coffin free, out of respect for the deceased. After the coffin walked a procession of old women, beggars, and two cripples. The peasants on the road crossed themselves piously. And Yakob was very satisfied that everything passed off in honour, order, and cheapness, without offence to anyone. When saying good-bye for the last time to Marfa, he tapped the coffin with his fingers, and thought "An excellent piece of work."

But while he was returning from the graveyard he was overcome with extreme weariness. He felt unwell, he breathed feverishly and heavily, he could hardly stand on his feet. His brain was full of unaccustomed thoughts. He remembered again that he had never taken pity on Marfa and never caressed her. The fifty-two years during which they had lived in the same cabin stretched back to eternity, yet in the whole of that eternity he had never thought of her. never paid any attention to her, but treated her as if she were a cat or a dog. Yet every day she had lighted the stove, boiled and baked, fetched water, chopped wood, slept with him on the same bed; and when he returned drunk from weddings, she had taken his fiddle respectfully, and hung it on the wall, and put him to bed—all this silently with a timid, worried expression on her face. And now he felt that he could take pity on her, and would like to buy her a present, but it was too late. . . .

Towards Yakob smiling and bowing came Rothschild.

"I was looking for you, uncle," he said. "Moses Ilitch sends his compliments, and asks you to come across to him at once."

Yakob felt inclined to cry.

"Begone!" he shouted, and continued his path.

"You can't mean that," cried Rothschild in alarm, running after him. "Moses Ilitch will take offence! He wants you at once."

The way in which the Jew puffed and blinked, and the multitude of his red freckles awoke in Yakob disgust. He felt disgust, too, for his green frock-coat, with its black patches, and his whole fragile, delicate figure.

"What do you mean by coming after me, garlic?" he shouted. "Keep off!"

The Jew also grew angry, and cried:

"If you don't take care to be a little politer I will send you flying over the fence."

"Out of my sight!" roared Yakob, rushing on him with clenched fists. "Out of my sight, abortion, or I will beat the soul out of your cursed body! I have no peace with Jews."

Rothschild was frozen with terror; he

squatted down and waved his arms above his head, as if warding off blows, and then jumped up and ran for his life. While running he hopped, and flourished his hands; and the twitching of his long, fleshless spine could plainly be seen. The boys in the street were delighted with the incident, and rushed after him, crying, "Jew! Jew!" The dogs pursued him with loud barks. Someone laughed, then someone whistled, and the dogs barked louder and louder. Then, it must have been, a dog bit Rothschild, for there rang out a sickly, despairing cry.

Yakob walked past the common, and then along the outskirts of the town; and the street boys cried, "Bronza! Bronza!" With a piping note snipe flew around him, and ducks quacked. The sun baked everything, and from the water came scintillations so bright that it was painful to look at. Yakob walked along the path by the side of the river, and watched a stout, red-cheeked lady come out of the bathing-place. Not far from the bathing-place sat a group of boys catching crabs with meat; and seeing him they cried maliciously, "Bronza! Bronza!" And at this moment before him rose a thick old willow with an immense hollow in it, and on it a raven's nest. . . . And suddenly in Yakob's mind awoke the memory of the child with the yellow hair of whom Marfa had spoken. . . . Yes, it was the same yellow, green, silent, sad. . . . How it had aged, poor thing!

He sat underneath it, and began to remember. On the other bank, where was now a flooded meadow, there then stood a great birch forest, and farther away, where the now bare hill glimmered on the horizon, was an old pine wood. Up and down the river went barges. But now everything was flat and smooth; on the opposite bank stood only a single birch, young and shapely, like a girl; and on the river were only ducks and geese where once had floated barges. It seemed that since those days even the geese had become smaller. Yakob closed his eyes, and in imagination saw flying towards him an immense flock of white geese.

He began to wonder how it was that in the last forty or fifty years of his life he had never been near the river, or if he had, had never noticed it. Yet it was a respectable river, and by no means contemptible; it would have been possible to fish in it, and the fish might have been sold to tradesmen, officials, and the attendant at the railway station buffet, and the money could have been lodged in the bank; he might have used it for rowing from country-house to country-house and playing on the fiddle, and everyone would have paid him money; he might even have tried to act as bargee—it would have been better than making coffins; he might have kept geese, killed them and sent them to Moscow in the winter-time—from the feathers alone he would have made as much as ten roubles a year. But he had yawned away his life, and done nothing. What losses! Akh, what losses! and if he had done all together—caught fish, played on the fiddle, acted as bargee, and kept geese—what a sum he would have amassed! But he had never even dreamed of this; life had passed without profits, without any satisfaction; everything had passed away unnoticed; before him nothing remained. But look backward—nothing

out losses, such losses that to think of them it makes the blood run cold. And why cannot a man live without these losses? Why had the birch wood and the pine forest both been cut down? Why is the common pasture unused? Why do people do exactly what they ought not to do? Why did he all his life scream, roar, clench his fists, insult his wife? For what imaginable purpose did he frighten and insult the Jew? Why, indeed, do people prevent one another living in peace? All these are also losses! Terrible losses! If it were not for hatred and malice people would draw from one another incalculable profits.

Evening and night, twinkled in Yakob's brain the willow, the fish, the dead geese, Marfa with her profile like that of a bird about to drink, the pale, pitiable face of Rothschild, and an army of snouts thrusting themselves out of the darkness and muttering about losses. He shifted from side to side, and five times in the night rose from his bed and played on the fiddle.

In the morning he rose with an effort and went to the hospital. The same Maxim Nikolaitch ordered him to bind his head with a cold compress, and gave him powders; and by the expression of his face and by his tone Yakob saw that it was a bad business, and that no powders would make it any better. But upon his way home he reflected that from death at least there would be one profit; it would no longer be necessary to eat, to drink, to pay taxes, or to injure others; and as a man lies in his grave not one year, but hundreds and thousands of years, the profit was enormous. The life of man was, in short, loss, and only his death a profit. Yet this consideration, though entirely just, was offensive and bitter; for why in this world is it so ordered that life, which is given to a man only once, passes by without profit?

He did not regret dying, but as soon as he arrived home and saw his fiddle, his heart fell, and he felt sorry. The fiddle could not be taken to the grave; it must remain an orphan, and the same thing would happen with it as had happened with the birchwood and the pine-forest. Everything in this world decayed, and would decay! Yakob went to the door of the hut and sat upon the threshold stone, pressing his fiddle to his shoulder. Still thinking of life, full of decay and full of losses, he began to play, and as the tune poured out plaintively and touchingly, the tears flowed down his cheeks. And the harder he thought, the sadder was the song of the fiddle.

The latch creaked twice, and in the wicket door appeared Rothschild. The first half of the yard he crossed boldly, but seeing Yakob, he stopped short, shrivelled up, and apparently from fright began to make signs as if he wished to tell the time with his fingers.

"Come on, don't be afraid," said Yakob kindly, beckoning him. "Come!"

With a look of distrust and terror Rothschild drew near and stopped about two yards away.

"Don't beat me, Yakob, it is not my fault!" he said, with a bow. "Moses Ilitch has sent me again. 'Don't be afraid!' he said, 'go to Yakob again and tell him that without him we cannot possibly get on.' The wedding is on Wednesday. Shapovaloff's daughter is marrying a wealthy man. . . . It will

be a first-class wedding," added the Jew, blinking one eye.

"I cannot go," answered Yakob, breathing heavily. "I am ill, brother."

And again he took his bow, and the tears burst from his eyes and fell upon the fiddle. Rothschild listened attentively, standing by his side with arms folded upon his chest. The distrustful, terrified expression upon his face little by little changed into a look of suffering and grief, he rolled his eyes as if in an ecstacy of torment, and ejaculated "Wachchch!" And the tears slowly rolled down his cheeks and made little black patches on his green frock-coat.

All day long Yakob lay in bed and worried. With evening came the priest, and, confessing him, asked whether he had any particular sin which he would like to confess; and Yakob exerted his fading memory, and remembering Marfa's unhappy face, and the Jew's despairing cry when he was bitten by the dog, said in a hardly audible voice:

"Give the fiddle to Rothschild."

And now in the town everyone asks: Where did Rothschild get such an excellent fiddle? Did he buy it or steal it . . . or did he get it in pledge? Long ago he abandoned his flute, and now plays on the fiddle only. From beneath his bow issue the same mournful sounds as formerly came from the flute; but when he tries to repeat the tune that Yakob played when he sat on the threshold stone, the fiddle emits sounds so passionately sad and full of grief that the listeners weep; and he himself rolls his eyes and ejaculates "Wachchch!" . . . But this new song so pleases everyone in the town that wealthy traders and officials never fail to engage Rothschild for their social gatherings, and even force him to play it as many as ten times.

Sleepyhead

Night. Nursemaid Varka, aged thirteen, rocks the cradle and sings softly to the baby:

"Bayu, bayushki, bayú!
Nurse will sing a song to you! . . ."

Before the ikon a green lamp burns; across the room from wall to wall is a cord holding baby-clothes and a great pair of black trousers. Above the lamp shines a great green spot on the ceiling and the baby-clothes and trousers cast long shadows on the stove, on the cradle, on Varka. . . . When the lamp flickers, the spot and shadows flicker weirdly in unison. There is a stifling smell of soup and boots.

The child is hoarse from crying but never ceases. And Varka wants to sleep. Her head hurts, her eyelids droop, her neck twists. She can hardly move, and it seems to her that her face is petrified, and that her head has shrivelled up to the size of a pinhead.

"Bayu, bayushki, bayú!" she murmurs, "Nurse is making pap for you. . . ."

In the stove chirrups a cricket. In the next room behind that door snores

arka's master and the journeyman thanasius. The cradle creaks plainvely, Varka murmurs—and the two ounds mingle soothingly in a lullaby weet to the ears of those who lie in ed. But now the music is only irri-ting and oppressive, for it inclines to eep, and sleep is impossible. If Varka, hich God forbid, were to go to sleep, er master and mistress would beat her.

The lamp flickers. The green spot nd the shadows move about, they pass to the half-open, motionless eyes of arka, and in her half-awakened brain lend in misty images. She sees dark ouds chasing one another across the ky and crying like the child. And then wind blows; the clouds vanish; and arka sees a wide road covered with quid mud; along the road stretch raggons, men with satchels on their acks crawl along, and shadows move ackwards and forwards; on either side nrough the chilly, thick mist are visible ills. And suddenly the men with the atchels, and the shadows collapse in ne liquid mud. "Why is this?" asks arka. "To sleep, to sleep!" comes the nswer. And they sleep soundly, sleep weetly; and on the telegraph wires erch crows, and cry like children, and ry to awaken them.

"*Bayu, bayushki, bayú.* Nurse will ng a song to you," murmurs Varka; nd now she sees herself in a dark and ifling cabin.

On the floor lies her dead father, éfim Stépanoff. She cannot see him, ut she hears him rolling from side to de, and groaning. In his own words e "has had a rupture." The pain is o intense that he cannot utter a single ord, and only inhales air and emits rough his lips a drumming sound.

"Bu, bu, bu, bu, bu. . . ."

Mother Pelageya has run to the manor-hour to tell the squire that Yéfim is dying. She has been gone a long time . . . will she ever return? Varka lies on the stove, and listens to her father's "Bu, bu, bu, bu." And then someone drives up to the cabin door. It is the doctor, sent from the manor-house where he is staying as a guest. The doctor comes into the hut; in the darkness he is invisible, but Varka can hear him coughing and hear the creaking of the door.

"Bring a light!" he says.

"Bu, bu, bu," answers Yéfim.

Pelageya runs to the stove and searches for a jar of matches. A minute passes in silence. The doctor dives into his pockets and lights a match himself.

"Immediately *batiushka,* immediately!" cries Pelageya, running out of the cabin. In a minute she returns with a candle end.

Yéfim's cheeks are flushed, his eyes sparkle, and his look is piercing, as if he could see through the doctor and the cabin wall.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" asks the doctor, bending over him. "Ah! You have been like this long?"

"What's the matter? The time has come, your honour, to die. . . . I shall not live any longer. . . ."

"Nonsense, . . . We'll soon cure you!"

"As you will, your honour. Thank you humbly . . . only we understand. . . . If we must die, we must die. . . ."

Half an hour the doctor spends with Yéfim; then he rises and says:

"I can do nothing. . . . You must go to the hospital; there they will operate on you. You must go at once . . .

without fail! It is late, and they will all be asleep at the hospital . . . but never mind, I will give you a note. . . . Do you hear?"

"*Batiushka,* how can he go to the hospital?" asks Pelageya. "We have no horse."

"Never mind, I will speak to the squire, he will lend you one."

The doctor leaves, the light goes out, and again Varka hears: "Bu, bu, bu." In half an hour someone drives up to the cabin. . . . This is the cart for Yéfim to go to hospital in. . . . Yéfim gets ready and goes. . . .

And now comes a clear and fine morning. Pelageya is not at home; she has gone to the hospital to find out how Yéfim is. . . . There is a child crying, and Varka hears someone singing with her own voice:

"*Bayu, bayushki, bayú,* Nurse will sing a song to you. . . ."

Pelageya returns, she crosses herself and whispers:

"Last night he was better, towards morning he gave his soul to God. . . . Heavenly kingdom, eternal rest! . . . They say we brought him too late. . . . We should have done it sooner. . . ."

Varka goes into the wood, and cries, and suddenly someone slaps her on the nape of the neck with such force that her forehead bangs against a birch tree. She lifts her head, and sees before her her master, the shoemaker.

"What are you doing, scabby?" he asks. "The child is crying and you are asleep."

He gives her a slap on the ear; and she shakes her head, rocks the cradle, and murmurs her lullaby. The green spot, the shadows from the trousers and the baby-clothes, tremble, wink at her, and soon again possess her brain. Again she sees a road covered with liquid mud. Men with satchels on their backs and shadows lie down and sleep soundly. When she looks at them Karka passionately desires to sleep; she would lie down with joy; but mother Pelageya comes along and hurries her. They are going to town to seek situations.

"Give me a kopeck for the love of Christ," says her mother to everyone she meets. "Show the pity of God, merciful gentleman!"

"Give me here the child," cries a well-known voice. "Give me the child," repeats the same voice, but this time angrily and sharply. "You are asleep, beast!"

Varka jumps up, and looking around her remembers where she is; there is neither road, nor Pelageya, nor people, but only, standing in the middle of the room, her mistress who has come to feed the child. While the stout, broad-shouldered woman feeds and soothes the baby, Varka stands still, looks at her, and waits till she has finished.

And outside the window the air grows blue, the shadows fade and the green spot on the ceiling pales. It will soon be morning.

"Take it," says her mistress, buttoning her nightdress. "It is crying. The evil eye is upon it!"

Varka takes the child, lays it in the cradle, and again begins rocking. The shadows and the green spot fade away, and there is nothing now to set her brain going. But, as before, she wants to sleep, wants passionately to sleep. Varka lays her head on the edge of the cradle and rocks it with her whole body so as to drive away sleep; but her

eyelids droop again, and her head is heavy.

"Varka, light the stove!" rings the voice of her master from behind the door.

That is to say: it is at last time to get up and begin the day's work. Varka leaves the cradle, and runs to the shed for wood. She is delighted. When she runs or walks she does not feel the want of sleep as badly as when she is sitting down. She brings in wood, lights the stove, and feels how her petrified face is waking up, and how her thoughts are clearing.

"Varka, get ready the samovar!" cries her mistress.

Varka cuts splinters of wood, and has hardly lighted them and laid them in the samovar when another order comes:

"Varka, clean your master's goloshes!"

Varka sits on the floor, cleans the goloshes, and thinks how delightful it would be to thrust her head into the big, deep golosh, and slumber in it awhile. . . . And suddenly the golosh grows, swells, and fills the whole room. Varka drops the brush, but immediately shakes her head, distends her eyes, and tries to look at things as if they had not grown and did not move in her eyes.

"Varka, wash the steps outside . . . the customers will be scandalised!"

Varka cleans the steps, tidies the room, and then lights another stove and runs into the shop. There is much work to be done, and not a moment free.

But nothing is so tiresome as to stand at the kitchen-table and peel potatoes. Varka's head falls on the table, the potatoes glimmer in her eyes, the knife drops from her hand, and around her bustles her stout, angry mistress with sleeves tucked up, and talks so loudly that her voice rings in Varka's ears. It is torture, too, to wait at table, to wash up, and to sew. There are moments when she wishes, notwithstanding everything around her, to throw herself on the floor and sleep.

The day passes. And watching how the windows darken, Varka presses her petrified temples, and smiles, herself not knowing why. The darkness caresses her drooping eyelids, and promises a sound sleep soon. But towards evening the bootmaker's rooms are full of visitors.

"Varka, prepare the samovar!" cries her mistress.

It is a small samovar, and before the guests are tired of drinking tea, it has to be filled and heated five times. After tea Varka stands a whole hour on one spot, looks at the guests, and waits for orders.

"Varka, run and buy three bottles of beer!"

Varka jumps from her place, and tries to run as quickly as possible so as to drive away sleep.

"Varka, go for vodka! Varka, where is the corkscrew? Varka, clean the herrings!"

At last the guests are gone; the fires are extinguished; master and mistress go to bed.

"Varka, rock the cradle!" echoes the last order.

In the stove chirrups a cricket; the green spot on the ceiling, and the shadows from the trousers and baby-clothes again twinkle before Varka's half-opened eyes, they wink at her, and obscure her brain.

"Bayu. bayushki, bayú." she mur-

murs, "Nurse will sing a song to you. . . ."

But the child cries and wearies itself with crying. Varka sees again the muddy road, the men with satchels, Pelageya, and father Yéfim. She remembers, she recognises them all, but in her semi-slumber she cannot understand the force which binds her, hand and foot, and crushes her, and ruins her life. She looks around her, and seeks that force that she may rid herself of it. But she cannot find it. And at last, tortured, she strains all her strength and sight; she looks upward at the winking green spot, and as she hears the cry of the baby, she finds the enemy who is crushing her heart.

The enemy is the child.

Varka laughs. She is astonished. How was it that never before could she understand such a simple thing? Th green spot, the shadows, and the cricke it seems, all smile and are surprise at it.

An idea takes possession of Varka She rises from the stool, and, smilin broadly with unwinking eyes, walks u and down the room. She is delighte and touched by the thought that sh will soon be delivered from the chil who has bound her, hand and foot. T kill the child, and then to sleep, slee sleep. . . .

And smiling and blinking and threat ening the green spot with her finger Varka steals to the cradle and bend over the child. . . . And having smoth ered the child she drops to the floo and, laughing with joy at the though that she can sleep, in a moment sleep as soundly as the dead child.

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